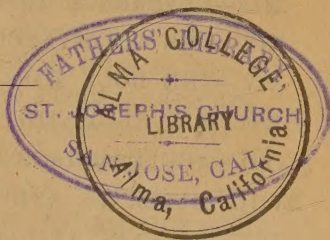
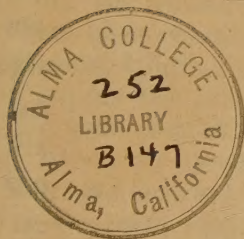


CATHOLIC SERMONS.

A SERIES OF SERMONS ON FAITH AND MORALS.

CONDUCTED BY

REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.



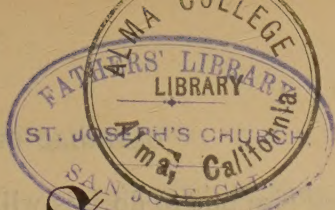
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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

No. 1. Vol. I.

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Price 1d.

SERMON I.

On the Commandments.

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments."—St. Matt. xix. 17.

THIS, my dear brethren, is the answer our Lord gave to a young man who came to Him and said, "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" We have to ask our Lord the same question. Our one business here is to save our souls, and we should keep on asking, every day, What must I do to save my soul? What does God require of me that I may get to heaven? How can I secure eternal life? To all of these questions our Lord will answer you as He did the young man, "Keep the Commandments." "Thou hast commanded that Thy Commandments be kept most diligently," the Psalmist tells us, and nothing will supply the place of this diligence.

We were created for this one object, to save our souls, and to do so by serving and obeying Almighty God. "Man was created," to use the words of St. Ignatius, "for this end, that he might praise and reverence the Lord his God, and by serving Him might, at last, be saved." This service consists in keeping His Commandments.

The very first idea of all religion, both natural and revealed, is that of responsibility. If we were not responsible to Almighty God for our actions, there would be no religion at all, and any doctrine which aims at taking away our sense of responsibility to God, is injurious to religion.

"He made us, and not we ourselves," and "He made all things for Himself," so that we are on earth for

nothing else but to do His will, and to be responsible to Him.

The very first solemn warning given to men after the fall was about this responsibility—that is to say, that every man had to answer for himself to Almighty God. The Lord said to Cain, “Why art Thou angry, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? but if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door?”—and almost the last words of the Holy Scripture are to the same effect: “Behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works” (Apoc. xxii. 12). The same thing is taught by our Lord in every possible shape. He tells us to produce fruit.

“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire;” and He us tells that nothing *else* will do. Many people, He says, will put forward the spiritual privileges they have enjoyed; but no spiritual privileges will avail unless they have been followed up by keeping the Commandments. “Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name? And then I will profess unto them: I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity” (St. Matt. vii. 22).

It seems hardly worth while, my brethren, talking to a Catholic congregation about the necessity of “doing good works,” that is to say, of keeping God’s Commandments; but, in fact, it is very useful to do so. We, all of us, find words and professions a good deal easier than deeds; and, besides, there are some very erroneous theories to be found amongst our neighbours on this subject. A great many good people still profess to hold the belief that “good works” are not necessary for salvation. If you wish to be saved, they say, all you have to do is to believe—“Believe, and you are saved.” This idea was one of the chief errors introduced at the time of the Reformation. In order to magnify the importance of faith, the reformers taught that it was, by itself, quite sufficient; and they declared that no good work of

any kind was necessary for the salvation of those who believed.

The real effect of such a doctrine was not to magnify faith, but to put an end to all responsibility, and, if it had been possible to carry out the principle in practice, it would have destroyed every sort of religion. What, let us ask, is faith by itself? Is it *always* pleasing to God? "The devils believe, and tremble," St. James tells us; but are they any the better for their belief? On the contrary—the clearness of the knowledge they have of God gives its bitterness to their rebellion. They have an intensity of hatred against God, which no man could have, from their wondrous and exact understanding of good and evil. So it is with men. If you have a very exact and clear knowledge of God, and continue to disobey Him, your sin is made all the greater by your knowledge. If your faith is very keen and very lively, so as to bring home to you the greatness and majesty of God, almost as if you saw Him face to face—and yet, in spite of that, you choose to keep on insulting and defying Him—does not your very faith make you more inexcusable? Imagine the position of a well-instructed Catholic who, from childhood, has been taught to realize by faith all the details of our Lord's Passion, and has, again and again, in spirit stood at the foot of the cross. If such a one persists in a course of life by which he knows that he is trampling under foot the Precious Blood, how will his faith help him? It is very plain that this very faith, which should have been so valuable, can only have the effect of aggravating his crime.

The Jews in the Old Law were guilty of more terrible crimes than any other people *could* commit, for the very reason that they had so much more knowledge and so much more faith. In the same way our faith may become not an advantage, but an aggravation of crime, if we do not join to it obedience to God's law. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments."

The same applies to the other theological virtues. What is hope without obedience? Is it a virtue at all? "I will gain heaven—I hope to be saved—but *without*

doing the will of Him who is the Lord and Master of Heaven!" Is not this pretty much what a man says when he goes on hoping without really trying to do what is right. Is not such a hope as this very like a *contempt* of God? Will it be accepted as a virtue before God's judgment-seat? Let us see the sort of answer he is likely to receive. Our Lord Himself gave it to us—"Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked man. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up what I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow" (St. Luke xix. 22). The careless presumption contained in hope of this kind is, in fact, a very great aggravation to disobedience.

Again, let me ask you—Is it possible to have a real love of God without obedience? Again, the answer comes very plain from our Lord's own words, "If you love me, keep my Commandments" (St. John xiv. 15); "He that hath my Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (St. John xiv. 21); and St. John, our Lord's beloved disciple, says: "For this is the charity of God that we keep His Commandments" (1 St. John v. 3). It is clear, therefore, that there can be no real love of God without a good will to keep His Commandments. You often find people who are living in the breach of these Commandments, and yet *fancy* that they love God. A love like this, however, is a delusion. It means that they love God, but they love themselves and their own way a good deal more. Such a love is a mere fancy or sentiment, and as far as possible from being that real charity, the queen of virtue, which cannot be had except by those who, at least, are *trying* to do God's will.

People sometimes think to make up for sins, to which they have attached themselves, by good works of one sort or another. You will find a man living in some sin or neglecting some necessary duty. His conscience reproaches him, and, as he cannot bring himself to do what he knows the law of God requires of him, he sets to work to do something to make up for his disobedience. He gives away a great deal to the poor or to the Church

—he says a great many prayers, and so forth. After all his trouble, he is only deluding himself. “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments,” is the inexorable law for us all—and all the “good works” in the world will not make up for his persistence in any one serious sin against God’s Commandments.

“If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing”—(1 Cor. xiii. 3.); and this charity is the observance of God’s Commandments. Everything else that you can offer to God is in vain if, with it, you do not also offer the sacrifice of your obedience. “Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed? for obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams” (1 Kings xv. 22).

We must consider exactly what it is that we mean by the Commandments. By commandment we mean the will and law of God, by whatever channel it is made known to men. God’s will is declared to us in several different ways. The first and most ancient of all laws is the law of nature, by which God speaks to the hearts of men. To this is added the special commandments which God has directly revealed; and these are carried out in detail by the law of the Church—that is, by laws not coming *directly* from God, but given in His name and by His authority.

I said the law of nature is the first of all laws. St. Paul says, “When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law, these having not the law are a law to themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another” (Rom. ii. 14). This, my dear brethren, is just what goes on in all our hearts. God has not left Himself without a witness within our souls. Every man has a distinct notion of *duty*, of what he *ought* to do and ought *not* to do, which plainly tells him of a superior

law that he is bound to obey. He *can* go against this law, but he instinctively knows that he is doing wrong in so acting. The voice of this law is what we call conscience. Conscience is the directing power which God has given to men to tell them what to do. It doesn't go into general questions of right and wrong, or concern itself about other people, but simply tells *us* what we must do or must *not* do in particular circumstances, and warns us when we have done wrong.

The first of all duties is to obey the commands of our conscience. You cannot ever go against the dictates of your conscience without committing a sin. Even supposing your conscience is mistaken in a particular case, still you are bound to follow it *so long as it is your conscience*. Your conscience is the guide God **has** given you, and you are responsible to Him for attending to it, because it is like God's own voice speaking in your soul. Besides this, it is your duty not to blunt or dull your conscience in any way. Many people succeed in taking off the edge of their own conscience, if I may say so, in such a manner as to make it nearly useless. Sometimes this is done by over-persuasion and using all sorts of arguments to deceive it. You can persuade your conscience to a good deal, if you try. Sometimes conscience is dulled by simple neglect. If you go on, day after day, doing what conscience warns you is wrong, of course, after a time, it ceases to warn you at all. What is the consequence? *Not* that evil ceases to be evil, but that people go on adding sin to sin, and heaping up judgment to themselves, whilst they scarcely perceive what they are doing. It very often happens that conscience is dulled in some points, though keen enough in others. You will find people who are most conscientious and particular about one class of duties, and at the same time utterly careless about another class. For example, a man will be particularly conscientious about all the duties connected with his neighbours, and yet go on neglecting his duty to Almighty God in a scandalous manner; or it is sometimes the other way. He may be very good about his

prayers, and think very little of cheating his neighbour in his money dealings, or, perhaps, is vindictive and quarrelsome in social life. You may say such people have only *half* a conscience, or that one half of it is asleep and the other half awake.

A man, then, has several duties with regard to his conscience. He must obey it, but he must also take care that it is kept in working order, and that not about one or two things, but about all his duties. Your conscience is your guide, but it has to be put right itself sometimes. It is not a kind of infallible instinct, but a judgment formed by reason and authority, and has to be kept right by comparing it constantly with the law of God as given in other ways.

I will give you an illustration of this, which will explain what I mean. Conscience is like the compass sailors have to steer their ships by. If they did not attend to the compass they would certainly be lost; but attending to it is not sufficient. They must also take care that the compass hasn't got wrong in some way or other. Some attraction on board the ship may easily have turned it a little or a great deal out of its right direction; so they must constantly compare their compass with the stars, or with landmarks of some kind. If they do not take the trouble to do this, the compass they are following so diligently may be all the while leading them upon the rocks.

In addition to the natural law which God has put into the heart of every one, God has given to us all a revealed law. This was given because the natural law is not exact and definite enough by itself. It is not clear enough to be applied on all occasions. It tells us, certainly, a number of general principles, but it is sometimes difficult to find out how these are to be applied to the purposes of daily life. Passions and interests are continually interfering—just like the bar of iron attracting the compass—and obscure our views of the natural law, so as to make conscience direct us falsely. The positive law of God—the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, as we call it—was given to men to strengthen

the natural law—to make its precepts more plain and harder to put aside. God gave them, as you know, on Mount Sinai, with great power and majesty. The Lord commanded that a limit should be drawn round the mountain, and that no one should pass this limit on pain of death, and then He descended on the top of the mountain in fire and thunder, and gave the law, commencing with those solemn words: “I am the Lord thy God.”

These Commandments, however, were given to the Jews, and we know that they formed a part of a very long and minute set of rules and commands, which we call the Old Law, or Covenant of God with the children of Israel. The question, then, is, How far are these Commandments binding, now that the Old Law has come to an end, and is no longer in force? It is plain the Commandments given to the Jews were, *in part*, an explanation of the natural law, and, as such, must ever be binding upon all men (because the natural law can never change); but *also*, in part, were particular positive precepts which were given to the Jews, and meant for them only. For instance, when God says to man, “Thou shalt not have strange gods before me,” it is merely a re-announcement of the natural law that man must worship his Creator, and no other; but when He commands them to sanctify certain days, and keep them holy with certain sacrifices and other rites, He is giving a law to the Jews which may or may not be continued to others, when the Jewish Covenant is at an end.

But how are we to know which Commandments are permanently binding and which have passed away? Moreover, how are we to find out the meaning of the Commandments—that is, how they are to be understood in particular circumstances? If we have not some way of seeing how the Commandments are to be applied to ourselves, they cannot be a guide to our lives.

This points to the obvious necessity of some living authority on earth to explain the law of God. A revealed command implies the establishment of some

Divinely established tribunal to say what the Commandment means.

Every human law that ever was has required some constituted authority to explain it to the people, and tell them how they must observe it. In England we have a number of courts and judges, whose business it is to explain the laws and see that they are observed. If it were not so, there would very soon cease to be any law at all. It is exactly the same with the law of God. The Catholic Church is the court appointed by Him to explain the meaning of His laws to men. It has two different duties with regard to the Commandments. It must first tell us what God's law is, and what it means wherever there is a difficulty, and then it must make such additional laws as may be required for carrying into effect the general principles laid down in the Divine law. In the Old Law, as I said just now, there were great principles, and temporary directions to the Jews to show them how these great principles should be put in practice. So it is now, except that the temporary directions are left to the Church to be made, altered and adapted to different countries, as occasion may require.

In the Commandments, then, there are two parts to be spoken of:—The great principles of right and wrong, and positive Divine precept, as they are explained by the Catholic Church (which are chiefly contained in the Ten Commandments); and, secondly, the ecclesiastical law—that is, the laws made by the Catholic Church to carry out these principles in detail. These last are commonly called the “Laws of the Church.”

The Divine Law is about principles which never admit of alteration. They are eternal truths, and bind at all times and in all places, and no one can ever exempt you from the obligation to observe them. No matter what difficulties they may involve, they always bind, and it is always a crime not to observe them. Ecclesiastical laws, on the contrary, are about things which are not essential in themselves, but are enforced as matters of discipline at particular times and in particular countries. It is clear that regulations of this

sort readily admit of dispensation. The authority that imposed them may think it expedient to relax them either altogether or in particular cases, or it may be impossible to observe them, or so difficult as to be *morally* impossible. In such cases these laws cease to bind. It is not that they ever may be violated without sin, but that, under certain circumstances, they do not bind.

To take an example: The Divine Law—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart"—*always* binds, and no possible circumstances could dispense any one from its obligation. On the other hand, the Church's law—"To hear Mass on all Sundays and holidays"—at once ceases to bind if you are a hundred miles from a church, or are confined to bed by serious illness.

The Commandments generally have a positive and a negative side—that is, they tell you some duty that you must perform, and some sin that you must avoid. "We must avoid evil and do good." Each Commandment tells us that we must avoid some sin, and thereby means to tell us that we must practise some virtue; or else it commands us to do some duty, and by this command implies that we have to abstain from all the things incompatible with the duty commanded. It is necessary, therefore, not merely to consider what is told us by each Commandment in so many words, but also to find out what are the obligations that come from the express command.

I have now, my dear brethren, given a general account of the Commandments; and I shall next time begin to treat of each of them in particular, and so get out of general remarks, and speak in detail of the duties and obligations of common life.

What I have said amounts to this. Faith is of no avail without good works. "Faith without works is dead in itself," St. James tells us. By "good works" we must not understand certain pious duties, such as saying prayers, giving alms to the poor, and so forth, as people sometimes do. These words have a more general signification, and mean keeping God's Com-

mandments. If we keep God's Commandments carefully, then our lives are full of good works.

These Commandments make one great law, which was originally given to us by God in our very nature, and was confirmed and published by Him solemnly on Mount Sinai. In the New Testament our Lord confirmed this law in the most striking manner. He did not do this systematically—that is, He never precisely tells us which part of the Old Law is to be retained and continued in the Christian dispensation, and which part has come to an end, and is no longer binding. The circumstances of the time and the state of the Jewish people rendered this impossible. He, therefore, left His Church upon earth as the one guide and teacher from whom all men were to learn His law. “He who heareth you heareth me,” was the commission He gave to His apostles. They were to explain to men what His law was, and had full authority from Him to make all those regulations necessary for carrying out in practice all the general principles He had taught them.

And now, my brethren, as you know, the observance of this law is essential. God is no respecter of persons. Whoever you are, whatever your position in life, whatever good you may have done to others in your time, still you cannot be saved unless you diligently keep God's law. “If you will enter into life, keep the Commandments.” Our Lord has told us expressly that in this He is a hard Master. “He that doth the will of my Father in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

But our Lord is not really a hard Master. “Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your soul, for my yoke is sweet and my burden is light” (St. Matt. xi. 29).

It is not, as the world would tell you, a heavy and painful burden depriving this life of all its brightness and joy; on the contrary, with His help it may be borne, so as “to give rest to your souls”—the best rest

which men can have in this life—the peace which this world cannot give.

His yoke should be sweet to us, because He bore it Himself first, to set us the example. He became in His human nature a “debtor to the whole law,” that He might encourage us to take it up after Him.

The hardness of the law comes not from Him, but from the rebellious and obstinate spirit in which people take it up. They are ungenerous, and wish to do as little as possible; they are discontented, and murmur at every sacrifice asked of them. Is it very wonderful that they should find it heavy? “The justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts; the commandment of the Lord is lightsome. The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves: more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. For thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward” (Ps. xviii. 12). Such is the language of one who strove hard to keep God’s Commandments. “In keeping them there is a great reward even in this life, and the reward of eternal life hereafter.

It ought to be our pride and joy, then, as it certainly is our first business in this life, to know the law of the Lord, to meditate on it, to love it, and to keep it most diligently. “Oh, how have I loved thy law, O Lord! It is my meditation all the day. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Thy words. How sweet are Thy words to my palate, more than honey to my mouth” (Ps. cxviii. 27).

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON II.

On the Worship of God.

“The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve”
(St. Matt. iv. 10).

I AM going to speak to-day, my dear brethren, about the First Commandment. It is, as you know, “I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them.”

The commands here are all negative ; they are, “thou shalt *not* make any graven thing,” “thou shalt *not* adore them nor serve them.” It is clear that there must also be a positive part, and, moreover, that the positive part is the most important. We are *not* to serve false gods, that we may be able to serve the true God. It would be to very little purpose, if a man were merely to abstain from worshipping idols, if at the same time he refused to serve the true God. The positive part of the Commandment, which is implied in the words “thou shalt not have strange gods before me,” is “the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

This Commandment is one of immense importance, and directs a large part of every Christian's life ; and yet, oddly enough, it is one which people very seldom think about. For example, you very often see people who consider they commit no sins. They cannot discover anything the matter with their lives, and are indignant if you suggest they may find a few sins to

confess. They are almost ready to say, "All these things have I kept from my youth," as the young man did in the Gospel; and yet all the while, perhaps, their lives have been passed in the habitual breach of the First Commandment—that is, they had never really and truly "adored" and "served" the Lord their God.

The First Commandment embraces all the things which belong to the service of God. Everything commanded for God's worship, whether generally by the law of nature, or by positive laws explained and laid down for us by the Church, comes under it. For example, if you neglect God, and do not think of Him as you ought, and do not give Him the service He requires, or if you fail to give Him your heart, or if you despise the ordinances made for worshipping Him, you are breaking the First Commandment. You may be breaking other Commandments as well. For instance, if you neglect Mass on Sunday you are breaking a precept of the Church certainly, but who can say that you are not also sinning against the worship due to God, and so breaking the First Commandment? By it we are commanded to be religious, and to give proper time and diligence to God's service. If, in fact, you are not religious, and pay very little attention to God's service, you are habitually disregarding this precept.

It is not enough to keep all the other Commandments if you neglect the first and greatest of the Commandments. How can a man expect to save his soul by so doing? People sometimes say: "I have always been just to others, and kind to my neighbour, and I cannot think but that God will reward me." It is certainly true if all these duties to others were done in such a way as to make up, in some sense, a service to God; but if they were in *no* sense a worship to God, why should He reward you for them?

The natural law points out to men the necessity of serving God, even without any special command. "He made us, and not we ourselves," and it is quite evident that He made us for His own service—and therefore that the very end of our existence is to worship Him

and give Him honour. If we fail in doing the one special thing for which we were made, of what good are we? A machine, of any kind, that won't do the work for which it is meant, is a bad one. It may be very pretty to look at, but its master will be very glad to get rid of it as soon as he finds that it will not work. So with ourselves. We may be admired by men and praised by our neighbours, but if we do not carry out the object for which we are made, we certainly shall not please our Maker. Our Blessed Saviour tells us this, in a very plain and forcible way, in the parable of the barren fig-tree. The master of the vineyard comes to the fig-tree and says: "Behold, for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down, therefore—why cumbereth it the ground?" (St. Luke xiii. 7).

We, my dear brethren, have been planted in the Lord's vineyard, not three years, but a great many years—perhaps ten times three years—and what fruit have we produced? What have we done for our Master's service?

Now, what are we to do to serve God? The first thing is to acknowledge Him. "We praise Thee, O God! we acknowledge Thee to be our Lord." If we do not acknowledge God to be our Lord, and this with our hearts as well as our understandings, we cannot possibly serve Him as we ought. We must acknowledge Him to be our Creator, and irresponsible Lord, and absolute Master. With earthly lords and masters we have our rights, by which they are controlled; but it is not so with Him. Before Him we have no rights, except just what it pleases Him to give us. "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? or hath not the potter power over the clay?" (Rom. ix. 27.) "All nations are before Him as though they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity" (Isaias xl. 10). "For who shall say to Thee: What hast Thou done? or who shall withstand Thy judgment? or who shall come before Thee to be a revenger of wicked men? or who shall accuse Thee if the nations perish which Thou hast made? (Wisd. xii. 12.)

These words of the Holy Scriptures give us some idea of the supremacy and infinite dominion of the Almighty God over His creatures. We must begin our service to Him by acknowledging this dominion with our whole heart, by confessing it, and glorying in it. When we have made this acknowledgment of our submission and servitude, there comes the duty of *adoring* the Divine Majesty to which we have submitted ourselves.

How little we see of this amongst men? How little is there which looks like real, heartfelt *adoration*?

If we go up into heaven with St. John, we find it there—"and they rested not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is, and who is to come. And when those living creatures gave glory and honour and benediction to Him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth on the throne and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power, because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Apoc. iv. 8); or again on earth at Bethlehem, with the Magi: "And, entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother; and, falling down, they adored Him, and, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh" (St. Matt. ii. 11).

These examples show us what is meant by adoration. It means the practical confession and acknowledgment that we are but dust and ashes in the presence of our Creator.

Our prayers do not take this tone as often as they might do. "Saying prayers," with many people, means reciting certain formulas in rather a "cut and dried" way which looks as unlike as possible to the mental position of the angels round God's throne in heaven. You ought, then, to throw a good deal more of the spirit of adoration into your prayers. If you do not, you are wanting in the very first element of *real* worship to God. Let us adopt to ourselves the words of

the Psalmist: "Come let us adore, and fall down and weep before the Lord that made us; for He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand" (Ps. xciv. 6).

Next to this humble acknowledgment, which is the root of all worship, comes the *praise* of God. The great work of all God's creatures is to praise Him. The whole creation—animate and inanimate, rational or irrational—owes to God a debt of praise. All creatures are formed for the glory of God, and what ought they to do but praise Him? "The heavens and earth are full of Thy glory." Listen to the words of the Church: "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee. We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

This praise is to be addressed to God first of all for Himself—"for Thy great glory"—as a tribute called forth by His infinite majesty, by His infinite perfections, and the impassable distance that separates Him from any conceivable creature that ever was, or ever could be, created. We have to praise God also for ourselves and for what He has been to *us*. We are to praise Him because He is our Creator and made us out of nothing. "For Thy will they were, and have been created." We praise Him because He is our last end, and therefore, by the very law of our being, we should be constantly tending towards Him, as every stream is bound to find its way towards the ocean.

To make the worship of God complete and fitting, however, something more is required, and that is petition—asking, entreating and begging of God for all that we want. The worship of the saints and angels is nothing but adoration and praise, because they are already placed in a state of unchangeable happiness; but we, who are upon our trial, are constantly in need of fresh gifts, and must, therefore, constantly ask of God. St. Paul says: "Be nothing solicitous: but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God" (Phil. iv. 6).

Petition, "in everything," is the way in which we are to show our constant dependence upon God. If you do not pray, if you do not ask for anything, it clearly shows that you have forgotten how dependent you are on Him. That men may always remember this dependence, God has ordained asking as the condition for obtaining His gifts. It is not as if He did not already know all that we want. "Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (St. Matt. vi. 32). He wishes *you* to know that you need them, and that they are to be obtained from Him. Our Lord, therefore, says to us: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you" (St. Matt. vii. 7).

Prayer, therefore, in the sense of petition, is necessary to complete the worship of God for all those who are living upon earth.

These are the essential parts of the worship which is due to God; but for mortal men, made up of body and soul, something else is required, or our worship would still be imperfect. We possess a great many different faculties and powers—and all of these, each in its own way, must take part in God's service. We must, therefore, *serve* God, as well as adore, and praise, and beg of Him. We do this by the virtue of *religion*, which makes us pay to God a distinct formal homage and service, in which all these qualities of true worship are offered to Him together, and are offered in the way which He has been pleased to direct.

This service must of course begin by being an internal worship. We must worship God "in spirit and in truth," or we do not worship Him at all. External homage is but the sign of the devotion of our hearts, and the external sign, without the real thing expressed, would be but a mockery. Such a worship would have no value whatever in God's sight, and, indeed, would be but an insult. "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." These words were the terrible reproach, spoken to the Jews in the Old Law, which our Lord Himself applied to the Pharisees. We must, then, begin to worship God from our souls, and

make the external homage we pay Him a true representation of the feelings of our hearts.

Interior worship is chiefly found in the homage of three great faculties. We are told to worship God by faith, hope and charity, and each of these virtues is, if rightly considered, a *true* worship of God, and also an *essential* worship; so that if any one of these three is absent there is no real worship given.

Faith is the worship of the understanding. When we accept and believe all that God teaches us in humble submission to His word, we are worshipping Him with the highest of all our faculties. The distinguishing characteristic of man is his understanding. By this power he is raised far above all other creatures upon earth. It is a faculty of immense power and immense pride. It is able to subdue and master everything in this lower creation, and would willingly rule over all things, as it does over the material things it meets with in the world. When we oblige this mighty faculty to own a superior, and to confess itself baffled, and unable to comprehend, then, indeed, we are offering the highest kind of worship to God that our nature affords. If men *refuse* this one sacrifice, all others are insufficient. Those who will not bow their understandings to accept what God pleases to teach them, cannot please God. No other sacrifice will take its place. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of God."

The virtue of hope is also a worship. By it we make God and His promises the object of our *desires*. "Where the treasure is, there also the heart will be." If you do not make God your treasure and the ultimate object of your desires, it is vain to say that you are worshipping Him as God. If the real thing that you desire is something apart from God, you refuse to Him the worship of a large and important part of your faculties.

This applies still more to the virtue of charity. God must be the object, not only of the understanding *and* of the desires, but also of the heart—that is to say, of the affections. If you refuse to give God the worship of the

affections, then all the rest is of little value. "If I deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." "My son, give me thy heart." This is the kind of worship which Almighty God asks from men before all things. Nothing will supply the place of it. You may give **your** time and your money and your labour to God, but all will be in vain if you do not also give Him the worship of your heart, by giving Him the first place in your affections. These three kinds of worship must be united. The worship of the understanding, the worship of the desires, and the worship of the affections, must be joined together to make a service acceptable to God.

The Psalmist says: "Let all that is within me praise the name of the Lord"—and a true worship must be one in which *all* the faculties are united. We must remember, however, that every true worship implies a submission to God, and is shown by obedience. If you have not the will to obey God, it is plain that you are not worshipping Him. As I said before, obedience is the real test of all the other virtues—and without it all virtuous sentiments are liable to delusion.

Such is the internal worship of God which ought to be found in our souls; but there must be an outward worship also. Interior feelings are very apt to mean very little, unless they are put into some tangible form. If there is no means of expressing them, they are very soon forgotten. Besides this, men are made up of both soul and body, and it is only reasonable that both the soul and the body should take their share in paying homage to God. We find, therefore, that there always has been some kind of external worship, and we cannot fancy any sort of religion without it. Man is not only made up of body and soul, but he is also a *social* being, so there must be some kind of *social* or united worship offered to God by the society of man in common.

The natural law, as I said just now, tells us to worship God, and tells us that it is our first duty—and our very condition here, upon earth, shows that the worship must be external and common to society, and, therefore,

must consist not only in feelings, but in external forms and observances. From this follows the obligation of observing all the things lawfully commanded as part of God's service. We are not only to adore, praise and worship God in spirit, but we must also perform the external acts by which our interior worship is expressed.

I have now tried, my dear brethren, to explain to you the importance of the worship of God, and to urge upon you our Lord's words: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve;" and, moreover, to show you that this command embraces a great number of duties.

We *mean* to worship God, but have we always done so?—are we doing it now? The Prophet Jeremias says to the Jews: "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord fraudulently" (Jer. xlviii. 10). How often do men defraud Almighty God of His due! How few give to Him that proper worship and obedience which belong to Him! In what a grudging spirit is it generally given! At least, let us be *convinced* of the importance of this great duty of worshipping God, and we may succeed in doing it better than we have hitherto done.

But I said before, there are thousands who live in the perpetual breach of the First Commandment. Let us see who they are, so as to be sure we are not amongst them. There are some who are obstinately rebellious against God. It is the original vice of the human race, and is constantly coming up in some shape or other.

Almighty God once said to the Jews: "Of old time thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bands, and thou saidst I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). And the same words may, unfortunately, be applied to many people now. "Who is the Lord that I should serve Him!" is the cry of human pride and rebellion, and there are always to be found many who listen to it. These, however, are not the only ones who habitually break the First Commandment. A great many men do not say this, or even think it, but they do not trouble themselves about religion. They "care for none of these things"—that is to say, they never will allow themselves to think

seriously about them. Perhaps they make it worse by talking of religion as a thing "good for women and children," and so treat it with a kind of contemptuous favour and patronage. Is such a state of mind much better than an obstinate spirit of rebellion? Any one who treats religion in this spirit is not only habitually breaking the First Commandment, but is in a state of mind opposed to the very idea of worshipping God. This is, indeed, a miserable condition, but, unfortunately, is common enough. You will not unfrequently find kind, good, honourable men, whom everybody respects, who are good in every relation of life, and yet cannot be brought to see or to attend to what is their very first duty upon earth. Perhaps it sometimes happens that their own good qualities in other respects blind their eyes to this one great deficiency. Let us pray God at least to keep us from this blindness, for it looks very much as if our Lord's words to the Pharisees—"Amen I say to you, that the Publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you" (St. Matt. xxi. 31)—will be fulfilled in them.

Besides these you find some who mean to be religious, and are religious in a fashion. They will sometimes do a good deal for religion, and profess to care a great deal about it, but unfortunately they put religion in the *second* place. This world somehow always holds the *first* place. They "mind the main chance"—that is, they look to success and prosperity in life—they want to get on and rise in the world, and they make it their chief object to do so. Our Lord says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you;" but *they* say just the contrary. They are willing enough to be religious in their way, but take care that their religion shall never seriously interfere with their success or convenience in life. They will let it be second, but not first. I am afraid God will not accept such a service as this. The very idea of God's service is that it comes first of all things. If it does not do this, it is a "fraudulent" service, which denies to God the honour due to Him.

A good many more fail to serve God because they grudge Him the necessary trouble. They would be good Christians if it didn't take time and pains. They know they cannot succeed in anything *else* without giving proper time and trouble to it, but still they think it very hard that God and their salvation should need any labour. If they thought, as St. Paul did, of a Christian life, they would never be so foolish. "Know you not that they that run in the race all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one" (1 Cor. ix. 24).

Consider whether you yourselves, my dear brethren, look upon the service of God in the right light—that is, as a thing requiring labour and diligence, time and self-sacrifice. If you do not, is it not to be feared that you are not giving to God the sort of worship which belongs to Him?

Besides those who go wrong from a false idea of what God's service is and what it requires, there are a great many who know quite well what they ought to do, and yet do not do it. Take those who neglect Mass on Sundays without any real reason. They know perfectly well that this is the very first thing they are required to do as an act of service to God, and that they cannot possibly worship Him as they ought without it, and yet they stay away! They know that it is commanded by the Church, under pain of mortal sin, and commanded *because* it is an essential part of God's service, by which the adoration and praise due to Him are to be paid; and yet they will not take the trouble to assist at Mass. What is this but to break the First Commandment in a serious way, besides violating the precept of the Church?

This is true of all the things which are commanded by the Church for God's worship. It is by the voice of the Church that God tells us what are the particular acts by which He is to be worshipped, and it is impos-

sible to worship Him properly unless we diligently attend, not only to the general duty of serving God, but to the particular way in which He desires this duty to be performed.

In conclusion, let us beg of God, my dear brethren, to show us how to order our lives, so as to make them a continued and complete performance of that service which is the one great duty of our lives: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON III.

On Idolatry.

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 St. John v. 21).

THESE are words, my dear brethren, which the apostle St. John addressed to the early Christians. It may, perhaps, seem strange that he should tell them to keep from idols when they had just given up idolatry to become Christians; and it will very likely seem still more strange that I should apply them to you. In this nineteenth century, you will say, there is no fear of idolatry. I think, however, we shall find a good deal to say about the subject, and, perhaps, a good many things that we may apply to ourselves.

First of all, what is an idol? It is any creature which is put into God's place. It is a false god, which is worshipped instead of the true God. Sometimes it is not put into the place of God, but put up beside Him. “Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.” It is just as much idolatry if you put up a strange god *beside* the true God, to share His worship, as if you worship it instead of Him. God will not share His honour with any of His creatures; so that if you do not worship Him *alone* you are not worshipping Him at all.

The Philistines wanted to divide their worship between God and an idol. We read in the Old Testament that after a great battle they captured the Ark of God, and put it up beside their own idol Dagon, so that they might worship both God and Dagon. The result, however, was that God cast down the idol like a log on the ground, and sent a number of plagues amongst the Philistines.

It is idolatry, then, if you give even a part of God's worship to creatures. Idolatry is, as you know, one of the greatest crimes that man can commit. Now, let us see what it is that makes it so grievous. It is an injustice to God. God made us, and made us for Himself, and we therefore belong to Him, and He has a right to all our worship. If you take away a part of this honour which belongs to Him, and give it to any other, you are guilty of an injustice and a treason against your Maker. The Prophet Isaias says, "And now, O Lord, Thou art our Father, and we are clay : and Thou art our Maker, and we are all the works of Thy hands" (Isaias lxiv. 8). Just as the vessels of clay, which are made, belong to whoever made them, so do we all belong to God, and are bound to give Him our worship. If, therefore, you take away this worship from Him, and, as St. Paul says, "worship the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever," it is clear that you are guilty of a grievous injustice.

It would not matter what creature it was that was put in the place of the Creator. It might be the most glorious and beautiful creature ever made—still it would be the same injustice to the Creator. But what, in fact were the creatures that men chose as objects of worship? You read how the Israelites made to themselves a golden calf, and worshipped it instead of God, and, as the Scripture says, "They changed their glory into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass" (Psalm cv. 20). Men in those days worshipped not only such idols as these, but also the "host of heaven"—that is, the sun and the stars. Not contented with this, they chose for gods all kinds of animals—birds, and beasts, and creeping things—and worshipped them instead of the true God. Can anything have been a greater injustice and affront to their Creator? This injustice makes the great crime of idolatry, but is not the only evil of it. Idolatry is also a degradation to man. It lowers and disgraces the nature that God has given him. St. Paul says, "Being the offspring of God, we must not suppose the Divinity to be like unto gold, or silver,

or stone, the graving of art, and device of man" (Acts xvii. 29).

When men forgot this, which was the true teaching of their own nature, the natural consequence was that they degraded themselves, and brought themselves down to the level of the creatures they adored. "The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men. They have mouths and speak not: they have eyes, and see not: they have ears, and hear not: they have noses, and smell not: they have hands, and feel not: they have feet, and walk not: neither shall they cry out through their throat. Let them that make them become like them, and all such as trust in them" (Psalms cxiii. 8). And what led people into this crime of idolatry? Very often it was that under these idols was concealed the enemy of God. It was really the devil whom they worshipped; so that idolatry was not merely something taken away from Almighty God, but an actual going over to His enemies.

I said before that, in considering the sin of idolatry, it did not matter substantially what the creature was that was put in God's place. Whether you worship the greatest and most intellectual being ever made, or the ugliest idol that savages ever cut out of a log, it is substantially the same thing. If you were to give God's honour to the greatest of the archangels, it would be just as much idolatry as if you worshipped the golden calf of the Jews. An instance of this is given by St. John. In his vision he saw an angel so glorious, that he supposed him to be God, and would have worshipped him; "and I fell down before his feet to adore him, and he saith to me: See thou do it not, I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus: adore God" (Apoc. xix. 10).

As compared with God, all creatures are on a level, and are all *fellow-servants*, and it would be a crime to give even the smallest part of the honour due to their Master to the greatest of them all. But you will, perhaps, ask, as I before said, what is the use of dwelling upon such obvious truths?—how can all this apply to

us at the present day? We have no intention of worshipping stocks and stones. That is quite true, my dear brethren, but you may become idolaters easily enough for all that.

The sort of idolatry in which men fall down and worship a statue, or an animal, or any created object—formal idolatry, we may call it—is not a danger at the present time, but there is another sort that is a *great* danger. It is against this principally that St. John warns us when he says: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

This sort of idolatry consists not in falling down before creatures and saying your prayers to them, but in making them your last end. If a man makes anything his last end—that is to say, the great object to which all his thoughts and desires are directed, and which, in fact, engrosses all his faculties—that thing becomes his god, in a very intelligible sense. We have a great many *subordinate* ends in life—things that we are trying hard to get—but these are only means to something else. If we make a thing the object of our desires, and thoughts and exertions, not as a means to something else, but for itself, then we have transferred to it the worship which belongs to God, and are making it an idol.

Our Lord tells us about Dives and Lazarus. Dives was a rich man who “was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day,” and he “died and was buried in hell.” What was the reason of this? We are not told of any special harm that he did to anyone. His great crime seems to have been that he made his “purple and fine linen,” and sumptuous feasting—that is, all the luxuries and refinements of life—his last end. He, perhaps, lived for them alone, and neither cared nor thought about anything beyond them. If such was the case, he made these things his god, and was duly punished for his idolatry.

This opens to us, my brethren, a very serious view of the question, and concerns us very much, because it is a temptation to which we are all exposed. The more wealthy, and comfortable and “civilized” the world be-

comes, the greater is the danger, and the greater our need of the apostle's warning.

We will take a little time, then, to consider what are the idols that are put up for worship in our day, and then we shall see how to avoid them.

"The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men." Silver and gold, and all the skill of man to fashion it! Very beautiful they were. All the genius of man was taxed to the utmost to make them, and it was their beauty and costliness that made them so dangerous. We must not be surprised, then, to find that things, which in themselves are very beautiful and really good, are sometimes a great danger to us also.

There are many sorts of idols. Some of them are immaterial—that is, existing only as ideas in the mind of man. Schemes and theories and feelings, sometimes of the noblest kind, may be made idols. Let us take a common example. Patriotism—the love of our country—is certainly one of the noblest feelings that men have. It is a grand and unselfish and ennobling sentiment, but do you not every day see it made into an idol? If a man makes the love of his country and its service his last end, so that it is the object of all his thoughts and desires, and stands between him and the service of God and the law of God, it is plainly an idol. In the same way the thirst after knowledge may be an idol—so may poetry and art, and the love of nature and of beauty of any kind. You will see hundreds in the world around who are making gods of such things. Then come idols not so noble as these, but quite as common—ambition, power, fame and fashion. The world is crowded with their worshippers. How many men and women spend their lives in the pursuit of fashion? The one great thought which occupies the minds of many is, how to get into a little higher social position; to get noticed by those above them in society, or, perhaps, to be able to look down on those who are now their equals. How many confessors can fashion count? How many martyrs lay down their lives for it in one shape or other? If we only worshipped God as diligently as some of these people wor-

ship fashion and fame, and rank and power, we should be saints indeed. We all find it hard not to bow down before such idols as these, and, therefore, we stand in great need of the admonition, "keep yourselves from idols."

I now come to another class of idols, which are more tangible. These are like those of the Gentiles, "silver and gold"—not in the shape of beautifully moulded statues, but of money. St. Paul speaks of covetousness, which, he says, "is a serving of idols," and declares that the covetous have "no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. v. 5). The love of money is indeed specially the god of this world, and in whichever direction you look you will see its worship going on. People of all ranks and conditions—rich people and poor people—wise people and ignorant ones—are to be found bowing down before it. I do not speak of those who are merely trying to get money—that is natural enough, and right enough, too, in its way. I mean those who make money-getting the one great, engrossing thought of their lives. See how people admire and respect a man who has plenty of money! as if the very fact of having it rendered him almost a superior being! See how people give up their time and their health and happiness in order to obtain riches, which very likely they will never be able to enjoy! You have very often, I daresay, read of misers who have spent their whole lives hoarding up money. To add shilling to shilling men have been known to give up everything the world can offer, and unfortunately their eternal salvation as well, and, at last, literally to starve themselves to death for the sake of their money. Is not this making a god of it just as much as if they went down on their knees and prayed to it? They could not put gold and silver in the place of God more effectually, if it were in the shape of a golden calf to which they offered sacrifice.

This, of course, is not the common way in which money is made a god. It is generally not so much *money*, as money's *worth*, which is worshipped. Most men worship money that they may get fine houses and

fine clothes, and all the dignity and importance attaching to wealth. In this sense it is a most terrible idol, and draws away multitudes from the service of God. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven." The "rich man" is not he who happens to be well off, but he who loves money and makes it his god. He may, indeed, be a very poor man in actual wealth, but still he may make money his god; so that the worship of money may be found in a poor, humble cottage just as easily as in a palace.

Gold—the love of money—is the special idol of advancing life. As men grow old, the temptation to avarice is very apt to increase. In youth there is another idol—the love of pleasure and excitement. How fascinating pleasure appears to the young! To them it seems the most gorgeous idol, arrayed in every beautiful colour that the heart can conceive. No wonder that young men and young women are tempted to bow down and worship it! They have not found out yet that the gold is all tinsel, and the brightness all delusion. The day will come when they will find this out for themselves; but, in the meanwhile, it is a terrible idol, and many there are who forsake their God to worship it. The world is full of its votaries, who spend their lives and sacrifice their time, health, and life itself in its service. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life:" these things constitute the god of this world.

Let us take one particular phase of this idolatry—the love of eating and drinking. St. Paul says: "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction: whose god is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame: who mind earthly things" (Phil. iii. 18).

It is deplorable to think how many there are, at the present day, to whom the apostle's words apply. There are thousands who would be good Christians only, unfortunately, to use his strong language, they have made a "god of their belly."

Such people almost exactly imitate Dives ; they “feast sumptuously every day.” They make their dinner and good living the one great object of their thoughts, and never grudge anything to satisfy their appetite. They naturally become hard to the poor, and never can find anything to give away.

This fault is not confined to the rich. A great many poor people also fall into it. The moment they have money they squander it upon eating and drinking. They cannot be brought to make provision for the future, or lay up anything against times of scarcity, and, perhaps, even grudge the necessary payment for their children’s education—and all for the love of eating and drinking. It is hardly necessary now to speak of the drunkard. Drunkenness is, as you all know, the crying evil of our country and time, and pervades every class of society. This, I suppose, every one would acknowledge to be a most perfect specimen of an idolatry. A drunkard makes drink his idol and spends his life in its worship. Can there, indeed, be a more thorough-going worship ? He sacrifices to his idol, without any scruple, his worldly prosperity and good name, his wife and children, his health, and, very often, life itself. It would be well if that were all, but it is not. In a great many instances he sacrifices his soul too. Nothing can be too great a sacrifice for the god he has chosen.

There is one more class of idols about which I must speak, and this will conclude my list. I mean idols of flesh and blood—that is, the inordinate love of our fellow-creatures. What makes this dangerous is that love of this kind may be, of itself, quite right and holy. It is our *duty* to love our fellow-creatures, and to give to some of them the most sincere and tender affection. Unfortunately, this love may become a temptation, and may lead men into a kind of idolatry.

Women make idols of their husbands, husbands make idols of their wives ; that is, they allow their earthly affection to come between them and their duty to God.

This is no new thing. We have all read how Solomon in his old age was led away into actual idolatry, and

bowed down before the gods of the heathen. He began with idols of flesh and blood, and, from idolizing his wives, was led on to worship idols of wood and stone. We see the same thing happening every day. Men are often enough led away from their faith and the practice of their religion by inordinate love for their wives, or children, or by some other earthly affection.

What I have said of husbands and wives applies, of course, to many other relations of life. Our Lord says: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me;" and again: "a man's enemies shall be they of his own household" (St. Matt. x. 36). What does our Lord mean by these words but to warn us against letting even the nearest and dearest of earthly affections come between us and what we owe to our Creator?

To take another phase of the same subject. You see women *idolize* their children. They lavish on them an unreasoning love and an inordinate care and over-anxiety, so as to be completely "wrapped up" in these children. What is the consequence? Should God, who gave them, think fit to take them away again, then comes despair and sometimes rebellion. I am afraid that people very often commit serious sins by this over-affection, or rather idolatry. Can we be surprised that God should sometimes make these very inordinate affections their own punishment, and that His justice should sometimes strike through those very gifts that have been made occasions of sin?

If we love *any* creature too much—no matter how good that creature may be—we may rely upon two things: that our hearts will be turned away from God, and that the creature which He gave for a blessing will become a curse.

To put what I have been saying in a few words, we shall never be tempted to kneel down and worship images, but we are tempted, and shall be tempted, to that love and worship of creatures by which we make idols of them. It is, indeed, our great danger in life,

and the very thing by which we are most ensnared. I do not mean that every inordinate love is an idolatry, but it is something on the road to it. You must be on your guard, therefore, against all creatures. Good things, as I have said, and evil things, noble and ignoble, spiritual and material, all may become idols to us.

How, you may ask, are you to tell when you are beginning to love anything with an inordinate love? When you find your love for a creature getting between you and God, you must take care. A really *good* love for any creature ought to lead you *to* God, and not away from Him. If you find yourself putting your duty to God and your love to a creature into the scales, as it were, and weighing them, it is clear that there is great danger. If you *prefer* any creature to God, so as to be willing to commit a sin for its sake, you have made it an idol; and when you even allow the two to be put in comparison, you are already on the *way* to doing this.

The true way to keep ourselves from the worship of idols, my dear brethren, is to worship God as we ought. If you give to Him the full and earnest devotion of your hearts, and worship Him with all your strength, then there is no fear of creatures taking His place. You will then feel that all creatures, however beautiful and glorious and worthy of your love they may be, are as *nothing* in comparison to their Maker. He is infinitely above the highest that ever was created, and all of them together, and whatever excellence or beauty they may possess is simply His gift—a faint reflection, as it were, of His infinite glory.

All creatures are intended to lead us up, step by step, to Him. The beautiful things we see and admire on this earth should lead to the consideration of the glories of His Kingdom of Heaven. The glories of Heaven, and all the bright choirs of angels and saints, and finally the transcendent majesty and glory of His Blessed Mother, on which we love to dwell—all these are meant to raise our thoughts and affections to the Great Creator of all. If *they* are beautiful, what must He be who

made them all by His word, and clothed them with all the majesty they possess? If creatures are so worthy of love, and are able to get such a hold on your hearts, what sort of a love ought you to give to Him from whom they get every quality which makes us love them—for “of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom. xi. 36).

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON IV.

On False Religions.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 8).

THE great duty imposed upon us, my dear brethren, by the Commandments, is to worship God our Creator, and Him alone. I have been explaining the importance of this obligation, and saying that if you want to get to heaven you must adore the Lord your God, and take care to have no strange gods before Him.

There is something more, however, to be considered in God's worship. It is not enough to serve the true God, but you must also worship Him in the *right way*—that is to say, in the way in which it is His will to be worshipped, according to the rules He has laid down, and not according to your own fancies.

God alone knows His own nature and attributes, and how He ought to be honoured. He only can tell the kind of "religion" which is suited to Him and to us. The moment God has pleased to reveal Himself to men and make known His will to them, it becomes a matter of strict necessity and obligation to carry out His will and worship Him as He has commanded.

This seems too plain and obvious to need any words at all; and yet it is the exact contrary of what you hear every day. "What does it matter about small trifles in religion? How can you be so bigoted as to make a fuss about trivial differences? Why cannot we all fraternize and join together without troubling ourselves about such things? One religion after all is pretty much the same as another." I daresay you have heard things like this said hundreds of times, and, my dear brethren, you will be told they are "common sense." It is "a common-

sense way of looking at religion," according to a great many people.

Such things, however, like a good many others sometimes called common sense, are very foolish. To say that one religion is as good as another, is just the same as saying that neither of them is true—or else that truth and falsehood are equally good. In the same way when people talk about "trifling differences of creeds," it means either that God has never given us any revelation, or else that it is no affair of ours to attend to what He has revealed. Every false religion and false worship is a crime and an insult to Almighty God. It is, *in fact*, a falsehood—something untrue in itself, and, therefore, as such, an abomination to God. It is an act of carelessness, where all the care man can give is not enough, and it is an act of insubordination, despising God's regulations and the authorities He has established. All this is contained in every act of false worship *in itself*. When you come to consider this act as the doing of some particular person, then comes the question how far it is by his own fault. That depends upon the means of knowledge which he possesses. If any one offers to God a worship which, in his heart, he sincerely believes to be the worship which God has ordained, that does not make his worship a true and right one in itself, but it is an excuse for him. What he does is done in ignorance; and if it is not his own fault that he is ignorant, God will not condemn him for it; but that will not make a thing true which is really false.

But people say: "What does it matter about little doctrinal questions, if your heart is all right?" Let us get the answer, not from ourselves, but from the Holy Scriptures. Our Lord sent out His apostles to preach the Gospel, and finishes His commission with these words: "Teaching them to observe *all* these things whatsoever I have commanded you" (St. Mat. xxviii. 20). And in another place He says: "He that shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (St. Mat. v. 19).

St. Paul, after he had been preaching the Gospel, says, in the words I put for my text: "If any one, even an angel from heaven, preaches another gospel, let him be anathema." This does not look much as if it "didn't matter."

Again people sometimes say, "It can't signify in what *way* you offer up your worship to God." That was what King Saul seemed to think when he offered sacrifice. The Prophet Samuel had delayed and didn't come in time—so the King went and offered the sacrifice himself. It was this very act that made Almighty God reject him. "Thou hast done foolishly, and hast not kept the Commandments of the Lord thy God: and if thou hadst not done thus, the Lord would now have established thy kingdom over Israel for ever" (1 Kings xiii. 13). That was the consequence of thinking that one way of worshipping God was as good as another.

Take another case. "Nadab and Abiu, the sons of Aaron, taking their censers, put fire therein and incense on it, offering before the Lord strange fire: which was not commanded them. And fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them: and they died before the Lord" (Levit. x. 1). I dare say these priests, the sons of Aaron, thought that one fire was as good as another, and that "little external things" in the worship of God didn't matter—as a good many people say now; but God's judgment was very different. These examples show what I have been saying: that it is not enough to worship the true God with *any* kind of worship, but that you must give Him the worship which He has commanded with all the reverence and exactness in your power. That is to say, you must have the *true religion*.

Now, let us consider what *religion* means. People do not always stop to consider how much is implied by this word religion. It contains a great deal. In the first place, to have the true religion you must have true faith—that is, a correct knowledge of God as far as He has been pleased to reveal Himself to men. St. Paul says, "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for" (Heb. ii. 1). Faith, therefore, must be the foundation

of religion. A religious worship in which people joined together in forms of prayer, and external observances, without any agreement about faith, so that each one meant a different thing, would be like walls built up without any foundation to rest upon. Moreover, it must be the *true* faith. If you are mistaken as to what God has revealed, and have a false idea of Him and His truth, then the worship must be a false worship, and, of itself, cannot but be displeasing to God.

Next to a true knowledge of God Himself comes the true knowledge of His will—that is, of right and wrong. Here, again, it is not enough to take our own notions on these subjects, and think that anything will do so long as we are sincere about it. We have to find out correctly what is the real meaning of the law He has put into our hearts, and what He has been pleased to reveal to men. These two things make the foundation of true religion. But that is not enough. We must also know in what way God wills to be honoured by men. What is the kind of prayer, of praise and of sacrifice which He requires at our hands as an acknowledgment that we are His creatures? It is not for men to invent these things out of their own heads, but to study carefully what He has ordained. For example, if He has been pleased to establish a sacrifice on earth, as He has done, then it is clear that every religious worship which ignores and disregards this sacrifice is a false religion.

One more thing is necessary for the true religion : that is, that it should be carried out by the particular authority which He has appointed. In the Old Law God appointed Aaron and his family to be His priests, and every sacrifice must come through their hands. If any unauthorized person presumed to offer sacrifice, that sacrifice at once became a sacrilegious act. It was no answer to say that he could carry out the regulations made for sacrifice quite as well as Aaron's sons. "Thou hast commanded Thy Commandments to be kept most diligently" (Ps. cxviii. 4). These words of the Psalmist apply to all God's Commandments, but specially to what He has commanded for His own worship.

In order to worship God properly, then, you must have these four things: you must have the true faith, a correct knowledge of God's Commandments; you must know the kind of worship He has been pleased to sanction, and the authority to which He has entrusted the care of His worship. These things together make up the true religion. Nature tells you that your first duty is to worship the God that made you, and from this duty follows the obligation of finding out how it is to be done, or, at any rate, of doing your best to find out.

If you have any work to do, you know the first thing is to discover *how* it is to be done. You do not dream of saying, "It doesn't matter whether I am going the right way about it or not." In the same way, if you have a journey to make, clearly the first thing is to ask for the right road. You don't say one road is as good as another. This is common sense in the ordinary affairs of life, and yet it is exactly what people do *not* do in religion. It is the duty of every man to find the true religion *if he can*. I say this because it often happens, especially at the present day, that people *cannot* find the true religion.

A great many good people, partly from want of means of knowledge, partly from prejudices in which they have been brought up, are quite unable to find the true Church—that is, to know that it *is* the true Church. Well, if they really have used all reasonable diligence in looking for it, and it is not their fault that they have not found it, such people are not responsible to God for being out of it. Almighty God never requires of us *anything* that we *cannot* do, and when we have done our best He will accept our good intentions. But it is plain that we must have done our best. Nothing can possibly be an excuse for a false religion except that you could not find the true one, and thought that the religion you professed *was* the true one. What sort of an excuse would it be to say, as so many do, "I had no time to attend to it, and didn't think it mattered." Such an answer at once convicts a man of great disrespect and carelessness in God's service. "Seek first

the kingdom of God and His justice," our Lord says; and again, "One thing is necessary." That "one thing" plainly is to serve God as He ought to be served. Again, it is no excuse to say, "I went on as my parents went before me." If that were a right principle, it is clear that we should all still be pagans, because idolatry was at one time prevalent in the world. But it is not a true principle. Your parents had to find out the true faith according to the lights and means of knowledge they had, and so have you. They will be judged by their light, and you by yours.

In the same way, it is no excuse to say that one religion is "more convenient" than another, or that one offers more temporal advantages than another. Many people are strongly tempted to choose their religion by what they find convenient. One religion offers more opportunities of getting on in the world, or making good friends, than another, and the tempter tries to put out of sight that it is your plain duty to embrace the *true* religion and not the convenient religion. Again, people sometimes choose religion by their taste and fancies. They like the music and singing of one church, or the forms of prayer used there, or they are attracted by the eloquence of some clergyman. It may be that they have received kindness at the hands of particular people, and choose their faith accordingly. This would be all very well if religion were meant to please ourselves; but, if it is to please God, we must not look to what suits our own fancy, but to what is the will and ordinance of God as far as we are able to find it out.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man having found, hideth, and for joy therefore goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field" (St. Matt. xiii. 44). This parable is often very exactly realized in the search for the true religion. A man sometimes has pretty nearly to "sell all that he has" to get it. That is, he must give up worldly advantages and friends, and often his own tastes and feelings as well—but then, in the end, it turns out to be a real "treasure" or a "pearl of great price."

I have dwelt upon this at considerable length, my dear brethren, not because you have any need to search for the true religion, or any doubt as to possessing it, but because you often hear plausible arguments in favour of what is called "liberality." "Why not all join together in worship?"—"why keep up these little differences?"—"why not be of the religion of your friends? you know they are well meaning and religious people"—"why be so bigoted and exclusive in your opinions?" These things you hear so often, that it is quite necessary to see clearly and to hold fast the plain principle, that we must serve God in the way He has been pleased to appoint—and *no other*—however much any other way may please ourselves or our friends.

We, I have said, have no difficulty as to the faith which is the foundation of God's worship, or the sort of worship to be offered, or the authority to be followed in what we do. Our Lord sent His apostles to be witnesses to the truth, and guides to men in religion. He said to them: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 8). And again: "Going, therefore, teach all nations; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 19).

The duty of worshipping God in the way which He has appointed, and no other, gives a complete explanation of the Church's way of acting. A complaint is constantly made that the Catholic Church is so "bigoted." This really means nothing else but that the Church is earnest and determined in maintaining the faith exact and unchanged. It is said that the world was thrown into an uproar about a syllable, and this is said as a reproach; but it is literally true, and is the glory of the Catholic Church. Rather than give up a single one of the truths which God has revealed, and of which He has made her the guardian, the Catholic Church would allow whole nations to fall away, or any other calamity to happen that Providence might permit.

We shall find also in this the explanation of the importance given to details—the “fuss” that is about vestments and ceremonies, about lights and incense. If these things really are a part of the worship of God duly settled by His command, or at any rate under His authority, it is clear that you *must* make a fuss about them. Things that are small and trivial of themselves become important if they belong to God’s worship. “Thou hast commanded that Thy commandments be served exceedingly.”

Think of God’s judgment about the “strange fire” used by Nadab and Abiu. You may find plenty of such instances in Holy Scripture to show how stern Almighty God is about things which concern His worship, even when they seem little in our eyes.

If external matters, such as chasubles and lighted candles, are merely matters of personal taste, it is, of course, silly and weak to attach importance to them, or trouble other people about them; but, on the other hand, whatever the Church commands as essential in God’s service must never be neglected or omitted to please men, and whatever the Church allows and encourages is always good and meritorious to be done when circumstances permit.

From what I have been saying, you will see the sin of *tampering* with the faith. “By “tampering,” I mean saying or doing anything to the injury of the true faith, or which is disloyal to God’s Church. Good people sometimes tamper with the faith by their speeches and opinions, or by their concessions to others, in a way which they do not quite realize. You hear them, for example, criticizing very freely. They don’t like this usage, and they don’t see the use of that; this idea is obsolete, and the other practice unnecessary. The Church might very well give way in this particular and alter her method of acting in another. I am afraid, my dear brethren, we have all heard rather too much of this, for there are a great many good Catholics who would like to be wiser than the Catholic Church.

Again, the same thing is done commonly enough in

another way: that is, by an unreasonable sympathy with those out of the Church, or, rather, with their religious *systems*. It is natural enough. In false religions there is often a great deal of good to be found, and it may be a great deal of good which particularly appeals to our personal feelings. For instance, in the old Roman paganism there was a great deal of grandeur, and sometimes a great deal of high principle. This was, of course, part of the natural virtue and religious feeling given to man, which is to be found in every system. The goodness and heroism displayed were, no doubt, sometimes a stumbling-block to the early Christians, and sometimes made paganism look to them not quite the bitter antagonist to the Christian faith that it really was.

The same thing happens, of course, much more frequently at the present day. The Church of England—the most powerful body opposing the Catholic Church in this country—has a great deal that is beautiful and good about it. It would be strange if it were not so, considering that the greater part of its doctrine and ritual is borrowed from the Catholic Church. Many of the prayers in use in the Church of England, for example, are old Catholic prayers, modified when occasion needs.

All this excellence, however, does not prevent it from being, as a whole, simply a false religion, and an unauthorized worship of God, which cannot, in its nature, be anything but an opponent of the true Church of God. If a Catholic allows himself to be carried away by a sympathy for such a system, because of beauties that may be found in it, or by old memories that stir his heart, what is this but an unlawful tampering with the faith? A soldier has no right to indulge in sympathies with the enemy. If he does so he is in great danger of becoming a traitor.

What is true of the Church of England is true generally of the other bodies surrounding us. Take any class of dissenters you will, and you find many excellencies. You will often see great zeal and piety amongst

the members of these sects, and much that you cannot but acknowledge to be very good. This, again, is not to be wondered at. In all sects it is not the part of them that is *wrong* that produces these good effects, but the part that is right. It is not the false doctrine introduced into them, but the remains of Catholic truth abiding in them, which is the cause of the good fruit. As I said before, this good does not prevent the system, as a whole, from being false, and from being an opponent to the true faith; and, as such, we have no right to sympathize with it.

You observe, I speak of systems, not of people. A system if it is not the truth *must* be error, and an opposition to God. Men, however, may be going on in a false system in perfectly good faith, and may be trying heartily to serve God, under the impression that they are *in fact* doing His will, as they certainly are in *intention*. This may be the case with thousands about us, and we need have no difficulty in believing that their zeal for God and their love of God are very sincere, although they are, unconsciously, involved in a false system. If such is the case, why should we not heartily sympathize with them? "I am a partaker with all them that fear Thee, and that keep Thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 63). So says the Psalmist, and so should we say of everybody that really loves God and has a zeal for His service, even though he is, by his misfortune, involved in error. You cannot, therefore, be too kind, or considerate, or gentle with the individuals with whom you come in contact, so long, at any rate, as you can even *hope* that they are in good faith; but, on the other hand, you must not indulge in sentimental admiration or regard for any system out of the pale of the Church, however beautiful it may appear in some aspects; because all such systems are, necessarily, false worships, and enemies of the Church of Christ.

There is another kind of tampering with faith which is still more dangerous, and that is by yielding to the so-called "liberal" spirit of the age, and talking and acting as if, after all, religious differences didn't so much

matter. Sometimes this is said in actual words, sometimes by demeanour and sometimes by not speaking when you should speak. I have, however, said quite enough on this point.

It now only remains for me to warn you once more of that great duty to which you are called—that of serving the True and Living God, and serving Him according to His revealed Will and under guidance of the authority which He has established. This is, indeed, a privilege. “To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to them that are without, all things are done in parables” (St. Mark iv. 11).

Again, it may be applied to you what our Lord says: “Amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them” (St. Matt. xiii. 17).

The religious knowledge which God has given to you, in preference to a great many, ought to be a “pearl of great price”—a “hidden treasure,” from which you can continually draw good things for the glory of God and your own salvation. As it is a great and undeserved gift of God to you, you ought to make a constant return of gratitude. This gratitude is best shown by the firmness and boldness with which you uphold this holy faith, and the assiduity with which you practise it.

Our one desire should be, to be able, when the day comes, to say, with St. Paul: “I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the Just Judge, will render to me in that day” (2 Tim. iv. 7). Amen.

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON V.

On Faith.

“Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are those that have not seen and yet have believed” (St. John xx. 29).

It is the duty of every one of God's rational creatures to find out the true religion, and there can be only one true religion. This, my dear brethren, is a first principle of the natural law and of common sense, about which I was speaking in my last sermon. There can be but one religion, because it is plainly impossible that God should teach one set of truths to some people, and another, inconsistent, set of doctrines to other people. If God teaches us that a doctrine is true in one time and at one place, we are quite sure it is also true at all other times and places. God is unchangeable, and truth is unchangeable, so whatever God has taught as an essential truth must always be true. “Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day, and the same for ever” (Heb. xiii. 9). Whenever, therefore, people talk of there being a number of religions which are equally true, and say that it doesn't matter which you profess, they really mean—that is, if they think what they are saying—that all religions are false.

Men are bound to search for the one true religion, then; but to embrace it requires the virtue of faith, and about faith I am going to speak to-day. It is one of the most important things connected with the First Commandment, and requires much attention.

In the first place, it is absolutely essential. “Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him” (Heb. xi. 6). It is the very

foundation of all our religion, on which all we do to please God must necessarily be built. It is the very instrument of our justification. "We also believe in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by the faith of Christ" (Gal. ii. 16), as St. Paul tells us; and again he says: "By the grace of God you are saved through faith" (Eph. ii. 8). St. Peter speaks of faith in the same way, as the means by which people are made holy. When he describes the conversion of the Gentiles he says: "And God who knoweth the hearts, gave testimony, giving unto them the Holy Ghost as well as to us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts xv. 8).

Now, the first thing you have to understand about faith is that it is a gift of God. God only can give the power really to believe with faith. Men may discuss and inquire till they are tired, but they can never arrive at faith simply by their own exertions and cleverness. Very often people fail to find the faith principally because they do not realize that something is needed *beyond* their own efforts. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16). "No man can come to me," our Lord says, "except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him" (St. John vi. 44). It is, then, a gift of God—a capacity for believing which God infuses into the hearts of men. For this gift something is required besides the bounty of the giver. It is necessary that men should be *ready* to believe—that is, that they should have sufficient humility and desire of light to accept the gift when it is offered. "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away" (St. Luke i. 53).

We have not very far to look for examples of this. There are many whose habitual state of mind is such as to *refuse* the gift of faith. They are so confident in themselves and their abilities—so sure that they are able to understand all about everything—that there is no room for a gift which implies humility. Again, there are many who are utterly indifferent and don't

want to know. They are not *hungry* and have no appetite for the food that faith gives. It is not wonderful, under these circumstances, that they never get the faith. This is why prayer is often so much better, as a means of converting people, than argument. If you pray for those whom you wish to convert, and get *them* to pray, you are more likely to put them into the dispositions for faith than if you spent a great deal of time in arguing.

Faith is, however, something else besides a *gift*. It is also a virtue—one of the *theological* virtues it is called. It is not only something which God gives us, but also something which we give to Him. A virtue must be something in which the will has a part, and which requires our own co-operation.

I spoke before of faith being an *adoration*, or *worship* of God, and the highest kind of worship. It is the virtue by which human reason bows down and acknowledges Almighty God, and, by so doing, offers to Him its adoration. I do not mean by this that faith is a violation of reason—that is, that we are obliged to go against what our reason tells us. We cannot do this, because, after all, it is God Himself who has given our reason, and He asks us for “reasonable service.” Our Lord constantly explains that He never asks for faith without having shown a sufficient ground for it. “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not” (St. John x. 37).

Faith, then, is no violation of reason, but it humbles, and disciplines, and controls reason very severely, notwithstanding. It is the acknowledgment that reason has a superior in its own line—that is, that there exists something *like* itself, but infinitely surpassing itself. A man cannot fail to understand that God’s *power* is infinitely beyond his own, and never dreams of measuring his strength with that of his Creator; but it is difficult for him to realize that the *knowledge* of God is quite as much above his knowledge as the power of God above his power. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted

above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts " (Is. lv. 8).

This truth really is obvious when stated, and yet the reason of man makes difficulties in accepting it. From this truth it follows that there must be a great number of things beyond human reason, on which human reason cannot pronounce with anything like confidence or certainty, and on which it ought not to pronounce at all. It also follows that there must be a sanction much higher than the deductions of reason, namely, the revelation of an infinitely superior intelligence. These truths are hard to accept, because they very often involve things which seem to be opposed to the dictates of reason, to be "contrary to common sense," as men say so often and so recklessly.

I say *seem* to be opposed, because, although it is not to be denied that some things in faith are a difficulty to reason, as a general rule, the things which are *said* to be contrary to reason are difficulties *not* to reason, but to *imagination*. You cannot conceive *how* a thing is to be done, or what it will look like when it is done. You see no opening whatever, and the difficulty is quite beyond any means of investigation you possess. People say, "It is against reason." No, not against reason, but against imagination. *Reason* says there may be millions of ways in which it can be done; imagination says: "I cannot conceive how it is possible."

A good illustration of this is given in the text I have placed at the head of this sermon. St. Thomas says: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (St. John xx. 25). St. Thomas, no doubt, considered that he was asking for proof to satisfy his reason. In reality, he had plenty of proof for his *reason*, in the testimony of the other apostles; but what he really wanted was something to satisfy his imagination. He wanted to be able to feel and touch for himself; to see what our Lord looked like after He had risen from the dead.

The same thing happens now about the truths of faith

Men want, intellectually, to touch and to feel, to handle them mentally, and investigate them, and to see how everything is to be done, and what it will look like when it is done. Because faith will not gratify them in all this, they cry out that faith is against their reason, whereas, in reality, it is only baffling and disappointing to their imagination.

The virtue of faith, then, consists in an intellectual submission to the authority of God. You sometimes find people who think they can have faith without making this submission. It is not *really* that they submit to the faith, but they merely *agree* with it. The things that are proposed to them for belief are things that seem natural and reasonable to expect, or to which they are accustomed. They accept these things *not* because they come from a Supreme Authority, but because they happen to agree with their own views. This is *not* really faith at all, and this is shown the moment any truth happens to appear to them unsatisfactory or difficult. Then they refuse to accept it, and give up what they thought was their faith. In reality, they never had any faith to give up, because they never had made the submission, which is the very essence of faith.

The same kind of thing is sometimes found in a different form amongst those who really have faith. They really submit, but they do so in a grudging and unwilling manner. They deserve the reproach our Lord addresses to the disciples on the way to Emmaus: they are "foolish and slow of heart to believe" (St. Luke xxiv. 25). They hold out against the duty of believing as long as possible, and consider it a hard thing that God has made known to them the "uncertain and hidden things of His wisdom." Men require certain dispositions of mind that they may receive the faith—and they must also take the proper means to preserve it. The apostles said: "Lord, increase our faith" (St. Luke xvii. 5). If we do not pray and do not act up to our faith, we run the risk of losing it. It is the want of prayer and diligence that makes the great difficulty of faith. It is because men are so negligent in doing their duty by their faith, in

exercising the *virtue* of faith, that our Lord says: "The Son of man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?" (St. Luke xviii. 8.)

I have been speaking of the duty of *increasing* your faith, and yet it is quite true, in another sense, that faith is a virtue that has no degrees. You either believe or disbelieve, and you cannot *half* have faith. Faith means accepting the "object" of faith, on the "motive" of faith. If you do not accept the whole of the object of faith, or do not receive it on the real motive of faith, you have no faith at all. The *object* of faith is what you have to believe, and the motive, the *reason* you have for believing it. There are a great number of truths proposed for your belief, but no one of these is the *object* of faith. The real object is the *whole* of God's revelation, including in it the authority by which He has been pleased to make it known to men. The object of faith, then, is the whole teaching of the Catholic Church. If you were knowingly to exclude any one article which was proposed for your belief, you would cease to have faith, because your object of faith would no longer be God's teaching, but a number of truths of your own selection. For this reason, when we make an act of faith, we generally mention, in detail, a number of great truths, but we always finish with some such expression as this: "Moreover, I believe whatsoever else the Catholic Church proposes to be believed." St. Paul says we are to have "One Lord, one faith, and one baptism" (Eph. iv. 5). We can have this "one faith" only by having one distinct and clear object of faith, which we all accept. If each one believed just what, for the moment, appeared to him reasonable, it is clear men could not have one faith, and, indeed, could not have any faith at all, since following and adhering to your own views is nothing like the "obedience" and submission which is the very essence of the virtue of faith.

The "motive" of faith is the authority of God. You believe because God has spoken, and you know what truths you are to believe, because you are convinced that

ON FAITH.

God has given authority to His Church to teach you His revelation. If you believe on any other ground, your belief is not faith at all. If, for instance, you accept any article of faith because it seems to present no difficulty to your reason or your imagination, it is not faith, but simple private opinion. It will easily and generally be the case that the truths taught seem natural and reasonable to you, but that must not be the *ground* of your belief in them. You must accept everything, easy or difficult, on the same ground "because God, who is the Sovereign Truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has revealed all these things to this His Church."

Faith is, then, as I have said, a gift and a virtue; but it has also another special quality. It is the foundation on which all virtues must be built up. In the natural order men can do many excellent things; but there can be no supernatural virtue without faith, since, as I before quoted, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

A *foundation*, however, implies that something is put upon it. If nothing is built upon a foundation it is almost, from the very idea of the thing, a useless structure. In the same way, faith is insufficient for our salvation if no good structure is built upon it.

As I tried to show you before, faith with an evil life built upon it gives a special character of malice to the evil. If you have a great faith and strongly realize all the truths faith teaches, and yet you continue to be rebellious, and perverse and ungrateful, your sin becomes all the more unpardonable from the very clearness of your faith. St. James says: "So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself. But some men will say: Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith without works, and I will show thee by works my faith. Thou believest that there is one God. Thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? For even as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (St. James ii. 17); and St.

Paul, who was especially the apostle of faith—that is, who was obliged to insist very much on the excellence of faith, on account of the errors then prevailing—St. Paul says pretty much what St. James tells us, in these words: “If I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing” (1 Cor. xiii. 2).

All this goes to show that faith must be used as a foundation on which to build a Christian life. Build up a superstructure of religion and piety and virtuous action, and faith is not only a great virtue in itself, but gives a special value to everything you do; but if you build evil and wickedness on your faith, or if you build nothing on it, then your very faith may become your condemnation.

I have now tried to give an account of the great virtue of faith, and perhaps dwelt rather too much at length on one or two points connected with it. I want, however, my dear brethren, to be a little more practical before I conclude.

You have all of you the faith. Some of you received it as children, and have had it all your lives, so that you may say with the Psalmist, “Thy testimonies have I taken for an heritage for ever” (Ps. cxviii. 3). Others, again, have been called into the fold of Christ by the special favour of God’s Providence. It does not matter: in either case your faith is the gift of God. “For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will” (Phil. ii. 13). It is a gift, and the most precious and fruitful of all gifts—a “pearl of great price.” Now, I want to ask you: Do you cherish and value and make much of this gift? Do you look upon it as a great thing that God has given you, or as a mere matter of course? Do you think of it as a treasure which has to be made to fructify—as a foundation on which a building has to be erected—or do you simply forget that such a gift requires something from you? For example: How often do you pray to God to keep up and foster by His

grace the faith He has given, and to enable you to live worthy of it?

Again, you have the only faith which is *one*—that is, which really binds men together in one religion, because they all believe alike. Do you make this faith a bond which unites you in charity with all other Catholics? There are plenty of things which unite men together in this world; for example, nationality, sympathy, similarity of ideas, and so forth. Is there any one which *ought* to be such a strong bond of union as unity of faith? St. Paul tells us to “work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith” (Gal. vi. 10). And yet you find a good many people who have scarcely any sympathy for those of the “household of the faith.” Does this look as if they appreciated their faith as they ought to do?

Your faith also is a virtue to be exercised. If you wished to be perfect in any other virtue—say humility or patience—you would understand that you must become so by practice. It is the same with faith. You practise it by frequently making “acts” of faith. Such “acts of faith” are often made in the form of prayers, which we repeat every day, in which we express our faith in plain terms. These are excellent acts of faith, if you follow them diligently, and do not allow them to degenerate into mere empty words. Better acts of faith, however, are those which you make when a difficulty or a trial arises, or some temptation comes across your mind. There is generally much more earnestness and reality in such cases. The best of all acts of faith, however, are those which are not mere words. When the martyrs died for their faith, they made the most perfect act of faith possible to man. So, when you *do* something for your faith, you are making an act of it much more effectually than you could by words. If you bear a temporal loss or an affront, or take some trouble for the sake of your faith, you are always doing a thing most pleasing to God. The apostles “rejoiced to be found worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus” (Acts v. 41), and if you want to make your faith a virtue pleasing before

God, you should have something, at any rate, of the same spirit. The notion of "virtue" implies something which is practised with difficulty. If there were no trials there would be no virtue. This is true of faith as of all other virtues. There must be "trials of faith," there must be difficulties, things to be overcome, things that require great *trust* and confidence in God, "That the trial of your faith, much more precious than gold (which is tried by the fire), may be found unto praise and glory and honour at the appearance of Jesus Christ" (1 St. Peter i. 7).

Men are very apt to complain of such trials, and to wonder that they are ever called upon to accept anything like a difficulty; but where would be the virtue of faith, if we were never told to believe anything which really *required* faith? If every thing were perfectly easy and simple, how could St. John say: "This is the victory that overcometh the world our faith" (St. John v. 4).

I said that our faith ought to be a worship of God, and, indeed, the highest kind of worship; but a great many people make it something very unlike worship. Some, for instance, are always criticising what is proposed to them to believe, and try to ignore, as far as possible, the principle of authority, which is the very essence of faith. They would narrow down God's revelation, and make it agree with their own intellectual standard, and, in short, are always wishing, to use St. Paul's words, to be "more wise than it behoveth to be wise." This does not look much like the obedience of faith. Our Lord says: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 3). To be a true worship, your faith should be of this kind—that is, a generous and willing and joyful submission of your intellect to God's revelation the moment it is made known to you. You ought to encourage a readiness to believe—that is, not, of course, to believe without due warrant, but a readiness to welcome every Divine teaching as a ray of Divine light, without being over anxious to test everything by your own little lantern, the light

of your understanding. St. Peter says : " We have the more firm prophetic word : whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts. Understanding this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation " (2 St. Peter i. 19). This world must always be a dark place, and no light that we can bring to bear upon it by our own " private interpretation " can ever really throw light upon it. We ought, therefore, gladly to welcome every ray of light that may be given to us by revelation coming to us through the channels God has appointed.

Try, then, my dear brethren, to be " as little children " in your obedience to faith, and then your faith will be a real worship of God, and you will be in the safe way to have " peace and joy in believing." I said before that we have all one faith. Every Catholic, good or bad, learned or ignorant, has precisely the same faith, because we all have the same object of faith. In another sense, however, faith is very different with different individuals. Some have much more of the spirit of faith than others. For examples of this we have only to look into the lives of Saints and holy people. You see that to them faith was the guiding principle of life. Everything they did was directed by motives of faith. The judgment they formed of every circumstance of human life was affected by the light thrown on it by faith ; so that they reckoned things to be good or evil, loss or gain, according to the principles which faith put before them. In short, to them the whole of life received its colouring from their faith. This is what the Holy Scripture calls *living* by faith. " The just man liveth by faith " (Rom. i. 17). Every just man, then, not only has the faith, but in some degree or other *lives* by faith. The more thoroughly and completely he does so, the more claim has he to be considered a just man.

On the other hand, only too many are to be found who have the faith, but allow it to remain quite unfruitful in their minds — as to produce little or no effect on

their conduct. To see their actions, to hear their talk, you would hardly fancy they had any faith at all.

If you want to make your faith produce fruit and be available for your salvation, my dear brethren, you must not be content to have and to keep the true faith, but you must try to make it a living faith. Meditate on the truths you believe, and apply them to the ordinary concerns of life. If you accustom yourself to make these truths the standard by which you judge of human affairs, it is clear that they will influence all you do, and so make all your actions pleasing to Almighty God.

In this way your faith will not only be, in itself, a great virtue and homage to God, but becomes also a foundation on which you have built up a grand edifice of holiness and a Christian life. Amen.

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON VI.

On Confessing Christ.

“And I say to you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. But he that shall deny me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God” (St. Luke xii. 9).

IN these words, my dear brethren, our Lord utters a terrible threat. To be “denied before the angels of God” on that day when the just are to “look up and lift up their heads,” because their redemption is at hand! The sign of the “Son of Man” shall appear in heaven, and the Son of Man shall come in the “clouds of heaven with much power and majesty;” and “every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him” (Apoc. i. 7).

How fearful it will be for those to whom He looks stern and cold: for those whom He denies as cowards and traitors; to whom He says: “I never knew you; depart from me!”

Who could bear the shame and disgrace of such a painful rejection? And yet it will be the portion of those who deny our Lord before men. The duty of confessing our Lord, and the sin of denying Him, will be the subject of my sermon to-day.

We are bound to accept the Revelation of God with an inward faith; but this inward faith must lead to outward profession, or it will not avail. You cannot really serve God in your heart without carrying that service into external life. St. Paul says, “With the heart we believe unto justice: but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. x. 10).

Man is body and soul; and body and soul must work together, or else what they do goes for very little. It is a mockery to say you *feel* if you don't *do*. If your

actions do not correspond with your feelings, then your feelings are generally only a delusion and a sham. They may deceive you, and make you think yourself a great deal better than you are; but they will not count for much with Almighty God. If your heart and your tongue and your hands do not go together in your religion you have reason to fear that your religion is a hypocrisy, an untruthfulness, and an abomination before the Lord.

It is necessary to say this, in very plain language, because people sometimes delude themselves by saying, "My heart is good," whereas their actions are certainly *not* good. If a man does not *try*, at any rate, to make his actions and his words good, his heart certainly is *not* good. This is plainly shown by the words I have quoted. Our Lord is not content with the heart; He requires the confession of the life. "He that will *confess* me before men."

We will now consider how we are to confess Christ. In the first place, it is not necessary always to be putting forward your faith. You find people who will talk about their religion on all occasions and in all companies, and seem perpetually trying to force it upon others. This is not very desirable, especially if it leads you into talking in a violent and boastful way. On such occasions we are apt to say bitter and unkind things, which do a great deal more harm than good. It is certainly a good thing not to be influenced by human respect; but it is also good to be considerate to others, and, if possible, not to make your faith and the practice of your religion an offence and burden to your neighbours. When you do so, you will generally find that there is a good deal of vanity and self-will in your conduct. You need not, then, be always talking about your religion; but when you are asked, by those who have a right to ask you, you are bound to confess your faith. If you *deny* it when questioned, you are clearly denying our Lord. This is not quite enough, because there are many cases in which keeping silence is *equivalent* to a denial. Whenever this is the case, it is a plain duty to confess your faith.

Besides this explicit confession, there is another and very important way of confessing your faith. This is by doing those outward acts to which Christians are bound. When you are regular and diligent in performing the external duties of religion, in spite of difficulties, you are confessing Christ before men. If, for instance, you hear Mass on Sundays, notwithstanding small inconveniences, such as bad weather and bad roads, the trouble you take is a confession of your faith. You have heard, I dare say, of poor Catholics in Ireland who are in the habit of walking many miles to church, and are content to hear Mass, perhaps, out in the rain;—is not this a grand confession of faith? So with other duties. You observe the days of fasting and abstinence the Church has appointed, and do not shrink from the annoyance it may cause you, and are not afraid of being laughed at; by doing these things you often make a practical profession of faith, which has more merit than mere words.

Again, there are many little Catholic practices which are not only good as means of devotion, but are likewise a kind of confession of faith. The sign of the cross, the habit of wearing the crucifix and blessed medals, and having such things in your houses, are all indications of that readiness to confess the faith boldly which is so pleasing to God.

I now come to speak of the sin of denying our Lord. In proportion as it is praiseworthy and meritorious to confess the Lord, so is it a terrible thing to deny Him. It is, however, a thing to which, in one shape or other, we are often tempted in this life. The most obvious way in which this may be done is by a direct and explicit denial. It was in this way St. Peter denied our Lord. He found himself in the company of our Lord's enemies and he said, "I know not the Man." It was for this that he "went out and wept bitterly," and for which, we are told, that he mourned all the days of his life. It does not matter in what *manner* this denial is made. Sometimes it is by things which, in themselves, seem trifling.

In the early persecutions, when people were suspected of being Christians, all that they were asked to do generally was to throw a few grains of incense on to the fire. This was by way of offering sacrifice to some idol. It was, as people would explain to them, merely a legal ceremony to satisfy what the law required. No one asked them really to *believe* in the idol—it was a mere form. Sometimes they were not asked even to do this, they had only to sign a paper saying that they had done so. What a trifling thing this seemed! The idol itself was nothing, and no worship of it was intended. Still, the action was meant as an explicit and distinct denial of the faith, and, therefore, to do it was a grievous sin. Thousands of martyrs suffered unheard-of torments and died, rather than do this action which, at first sight, appeared so insignificant. The same thing was seen in our own country. A law was made requiring Catholics to attend the Protestant service. If they would not do so they were called recusants, and they had to pay very heavy fines, by which they were almost ruined, for refusing to attend. They might have said: “After all, what is the objection to being present at a Protestant service? We don’t intend to give up our own faith, and we do not mean to join in any strange worship. What harm can our mere presence in the church do?” They could not, however, consent to be present, because it was a thing distinctly asked of them as a denial of their faith. It was their duty to sacrifice everything in this world—as they did—rather than do what was really denying Christ.

It is a grievous sin, therefore, to do *anything*, however small it may appear to be, which is required of you as a denial of your faith. It sometimes seems a hard thing, to poor people especially. A good situation offers itself—a good means of gaining a livelihood; and all that is wanted is some little word or deed by which they are to deny their faith. How trifling the thing asked appears sometimes, and how great the good to be gained! It is just in this way that men are ensnared to their destruction. If they gain all the world by denying

Christ, they will one day find that they have made a terrible exchange.

But there are other ways of denying the faith. You may deny your faith by unlawful concealment. If you hide your faith for the sake of gain, or for convenience, or out of human respect, you are often indirectly denying your religion. Servants are sometimes tempted to do this to get into good places. They have to live and behave as Protestants, and keep silence about their faith. Whatever may be said against it, they are not to venture one word in its behalf, but have to listen to every insult in silence. An ignominious silence like this is very much like a denial. Again, a man goes into company and carefully conceals his religion, because he is afraid his comrades will laugh at him. He hears the truths of faith and holy things, which in his heart he reverences, ridiculed and reviled; and yet he has put himself into a position which makes it impossible to say a word. He has to laugh at jokes which make him shudder, and almost to take a part in them. How can any Catholic be willing to expose himself to this? In cases of great difficulty, indeed, it is sometimes lawful to conceal your religion, so long as you do not directly *deny* it—but it is always dangerous, and should be avoided if possible.

There is another very common temptation of the same kind. People are very often tempted to omit serious duties out of human respect—that is, for fear of what men will say about them. If you go amongst Protestants on a Friday, and you do not observe abstinence for fear they should laugh at you—what is this but denying your faith? People sometimes say, “I was afraid of making people stare at me, and I thought I should be laughed at if I didn’t eat meat like the rest!” and they think that this is a kind of excuse for breaking the Commandment of the Church. In reality, a motive of this sort only adds to their disobedience—something very like a denial of their faith. They are afraid of men rather than of God, and commit sin that men may not laugh at them. The same

applies to all other duties—to hearing Mass, to going to the Sacraments, and all other things which are matters of obligation.

I now come to a point which requires a little explanation. Any joining in religious worship with those who are out of the Catholic Church is forbidden. You may not enter a Protestant church to take part in the service, and may not join in prayer with Protestants even privately.

This is sometimes a great inconvenience, and looks very harsh and unkind. Servants going into Protestant places often find it very hard to refuse to join in prayer. People say, “Why should you refuse? Do you think us so wicked that you can’t join us? or are our prayers so bad that you can’t listen to them?” Nothing can be farther from our thoughts. The Protestants who ask us to join in prayer with them may be very excellent people, and in perfectly good faith. They have, however, unfortunately, taken up a position of religious hostility to the true Church. We may hope and believe that it is no fault of their own that caused them to do so; but that is their position. They are “Protestants”—protesting against what? Against the one true Catholic Church of Christ, of which we glory to be members. How can we join with them without taking part in the attack which tacitly they are making on the Church? “He who is not with me is against me,” says our Lord; and he who is not with the Church of Christ is against it. What right has a Catholic to be found under false colours? Is he not as much a traitor as if a soldier were found in the uniform of the enemy? The Protestants who ask us to join with them may, perhaps, be able to plead before the tribunal of Christ that they did not know the true Church of Christ; and, therefore, they protested and set up a worship of God apart from, and at variance with, that which He had established upon earth. But will that plea avail us? No. If Catholics join in any worship alien to that of the true Church, they do so as traitors, and cannot be excused.

I have spoken now of the duty of confessing the faith at proper times, and about the sin of denying our Lord, either directly or indirectly. I must add a few words about the general fault of being *ashamed* of the faith. There are a great many people who would certainly confess their faith if they were fairly put to it and couldn't find a way of escape, and yet often seemed to be ashamed of it. Surely, the next thing to denying our Lord is to be ashamed of Him. St. Paul says: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14). How different is the feeling of those who are ashamed of their religion, even in little things! Nothing can be more injurious to our Lord. How would men like it themselves? If you had a friend, and discovered that, although your friend was very intimate and affectionate to you in private, he was ashamed to be seen with you in public? If your friend tried hard not to let it be known that he knew you by sight, and endeavoured to avoid meeting you in any public place, I don't think you would value his friendship very much—indeed, I am not sure that you would not think he insulted you by calling himself your friend. There are a good many people, however, who treat our Lord and His faith in this way. They don't wish it to be known of what religion they are; if it is known, they try to make the least of it they can, to make its doctrines mean as little as possible, and to go as far as possible in giving up to opponents. Such people have generally a word or two of apology, or perhaps of condemnation, for their own faith, and sometimes a little compliment to pay to those out of the Church. Many imagine that this kind of behaviour is a mark of impartiality. They give themselves credit for great fairness to their opponents—great liberality, as people call it—and absence of all bigotry. I am afraid, however, it is because they are ashamed of their faith, and care more about getting the favour of men than about making a good confession before God.

Now, we are in great danger of denying Christ in these days—as, indeed, men have been in all days. If in the old times, when the world was rougher and more

cruel, it required great courage for men to allow themselves "to be brought before governors and kings" for Jesus' sake, as the apostles were, it requires great wariness, and courage, too, in our times—though, perhaps, courage of a different sort. Things seem so plausible, and temptations come in an easy and common-place way, so that there is none of the heroism of a grand resistance to downright persecution, and for this reason they are more dangerous.

We can only guard ourselves against such dangers by having firm and fixed principles. The first of these is that loyalty to the Catholic Church means loyalty to God. We cannot separate the two things. We are faithful to the Church only because it is the channel of God's revelation, and the means by which His will is made known. Our Lord founded His Church to communicate to men the graces purchased by His Precious Blood, and St. Paul tells us that "Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it; cleansing it by the laver of water in the Word of Life, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 27). For this reason He said, "I am with you all days to the end of the world;" and "he that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." It is impossible, therefore, to be unfaithful to the Church, to prevaricate its doctrines, or to deny it before men, without at the same time denying our Lord.

Secondly, we must have it for a principle that it doesn't matter in what *shape* the denial comes. It may present itself to us in the way that seems least important. Whatever is *really* a denial of our faith becomes necessarily a matter of the greatest importance, and we have to be on our guard against things that seem to be trivial, when they are perhaps meant to make us deny the faith.

Besides this, we have to consider that if we want to be brave in great things we must begin by being brave in little things. People often flatter themselves that

they would be faithful in a great trial, although they are apt to be cowardly in small ones. Is this likely? If you give way to human respect in little things, where your conscience tells you that you ought to make a stand, you are making it much harder to resist next time. If you were ashamed of your faith yesterday, and yielded little things out of the fear of men, the world will expect you to yield in greater ones to-day, and soon will consider you quite at its mercy. It is always much easier to make a firm stand at the beginning—the moment you are sure that it is a matter of conscience, and not merely self-will. If you do so, very likely your first contest will be your last, and you will afterwards have no difficulty in boldly confessing your faith on all proper occasions.

This is just one of the principles that parents ought to instil into their children. The children should be taught that their first duty is not only to believe, but to stand up bravely for their faith, without caring for what men think or say.

If ever you are tempted to deny the faith in any shape—and this may happen to any of us any day—you should bring before your mind the “good confession” which our Lord made before Pontius Pilate. Fancy Jesus standing before Pilate’s judgment seat, with His hands bound and His crown of thorns on His head. You can see the world’s power represented by the stern soldiers who surround the Governor’s tribunal, and by the cross and the nails which are being got ready for our Saviour. You can hear the voice of the world, represented by the shouts of the Jewish rabble, “Not this Man, but Barabbas!” “Away with Him; away with Him; crucify Him; crucify Him!” and “If thou release this Man thou art not Cæsar’s friend!” Fancy all this, and then listen to our Lord’s calm words, “For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony of the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (St. John xviii. 37); or, again, His words, “You shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with

the clouds of heaven" (St. Mark xiv. 62). How shall we be able to meet Him when He comes in power and majesty if we are now afraid to bear witness to Him and to His Law, as He once bore witness to the truth for us?

If we could only think of this when we are tempted to deny our Lord, we should care very little for what men could say to us, and be ready, as St. Paul tells us, "to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach, for we have not here a lasting city, but seek one that is to come" (Heb. xiii. 13).

But it is not as if we alone had to do this. If we have occasionally to suffer reproach, and even persecution, for confessing the name of Christ, we must remember that we are but sharing the lot of the Saints. St. Peter says: "Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you; but if you partake the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 St. Peter iv. 12); and, again, "Resist, ye strong in faith, knowing that the same affliction befalls your brethren who are in the world" (1 St. Peter v. 8).

We have before us a multitude of examples. From the days of the apostles until now, in every generation, there have been thousands who have confessed the name of Christ before kings and rulers of the earth, and been ready to die rather than deny Him. We have the glorious army of martyrs for our model. St. Stephen, the martyr who first sealed his faith with his blood, made confession before the council of the Jews, and for his reward "saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and "fell asleep in the Lord."

Since then thousands of every age have done the same—old men and timid girls, and even little children, have been found brave enough, by God's grace, to make this same confession at the cost of their lives. St. Polycarp, the holy Bishop of Smyrna, was brought before the Roman pro-consul and commanded to swear by the genius of Cæsar, and to blaspheme Christ, that he

might be liberated. Hear what Polycarp says in reply: "I have served Him these fourscore and six years, and He never did me any harm, but much good; and how can I blaspheme my King and Saviour? If you require of me to swear by the genius of Cæsar, as you call it, hear my free confession: I am a Christian." When the pro-consul threatened him with wild beasts, he said: "Call for them; for we are unalterably resolved not to change from good to evil." The pro-consul said: "If you condemn the beasts, I will cause you to be burnt to ashes." Polycarp answered: "You threaten me with a fire which burns for a short time and then goes out; but are yourself ignorant of the judgment to come, and of the fire of everlasting torments which is prepared for the wicked." This was the way in which a bishop at the age of eighty-six confessed Christ; but we find just the same courage and constancy in young and delicate women. St. Agnes, at the age of thirteen, to all the persuasions and threats of the judge, only answered that she could have no other spouse than Jesus Christ. They made terrible fires, and showed her cruel instruments of torture; but she looked at them all with cheerful composure. She was dragged before idols and commanded to offer incense, but "could by no means be compelled to move her hand except to make the sign of the cross."

What these saints did, thousands of others did of all ages and classes. And now, my brethren, we should ask ourselves: "Will not God expect *something* of this spirit from us also? Can we be Christians if we, too, are not prepared to do something and suffer something for the name of Christ?"

Our confession is to be made before men, but not before men only. What we do is done before Almighty God and His angels, and in presence of that glorious army of martyrs who have fought the good fight before us. "I saw under the altar the souls of those that were slain for the word of God, and they cried with a loud voice, saying: "How long, O God! holy and true, dost Thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that

dwell upon the earth?" And white robes were given to them, and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time till their fellow-servants and their brethren who are to be slain even as they should be filled up" (Apoc. vi. 9).

With this glorious crowd of saints looking on at our contest, full of sympathy, and constantly raising their voices to God for us, my dear brethren, we never need fear, but should be at all times ready to make that good confession here on earth which is necessary, that one day we may join them in heaven. Amen.

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON VII.

On Sins against Faith.

“Having faith and a good conscience, which some rejecting have made shipwreck concerning the faith” (1 Tim. i. 19).

I HAVE been speaking at some length about the excellence and necessity of faith, and I have also dwelt upon the importance of bravely confessing Christ. All that remains for me now to do is to speak of certain particular faults which people commit against their faith. Amongst the offences against the First Commandment, the Catechism mentions “sins of doubt, and also culpable ignorance of the doctrines of the Church.”

You must first remember that a *wilful* doubt of any article of the faith is a great sin. When you consent to doubt, you really disbelieve, and disbelief of *one* thing—logically, at any rate—means disbelief of everything. The very idea of faith is *trust* and *certainly*. “I firmly believe” is what you constantly say; and it is clear that if you are really trusting to God’s word, and relying upon Him, you cannot be uncertain. “He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind: therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord” (St. James i. 6).

When a person wilfully doubts he has made up his mind no longer to *trust* Almighty God, and is therefore guilty of a mental act which is inconsistent with faith.

There are, however, a great many things which look like doubt, but are really very different. Such things are temptations, but are not necessarily sins at all. You may often have difficulties and perplexities about faith. You cannot understand how such a thing can possibly be, or why it is; some

things seem to you very hard and unintelligible; sometimes it appears difficult to make one truth agree in your own mind with another. How, for instance, can we reconcile the freedom of our own wills with the infinite fore-knowledge of God? How can we understand all the wonderful things presented to us in the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist? Again, how wonderful are the dealings of God's Providence in all around us! The varied course of human life and human history—the mass of evil and sin we see in the world—the scandals that arise from time to time—the success of the wicked—all these things, and numberless others, are bewildering to us. Why do these things happen? We cannot tell. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"

All these things are *difficulties*, which people feel more or less acutely, according to their particular temperaments and according to circumstances. These are the very things that require *trust* in God; and your trust in God is not necessarily lessened because you feel the difficulties. If there were no such difficulties there would be no need of that trust and confidence in God's word which is the very essence of faith.

Besides perplexities of this kind, we are all liable to fits of despondency. At such times everything looks black, and seems to have gone wrong. What appeared bright and hopeful yesterday, to-day seems involved in the deepest gloom. At such times people even feel as if they had lost sight altogether of the supernatural, and cared for nothing. It is only a feeling: they have not really lost either sight or care, and a very small thing will often bring them back to their habitual state of mind. Fits of despondency very often take the shape of temptations against faith, and are dangerous if not met in the proper way.

You must remember that these varying states of mind are, after all, the nature of man—"he fleeth like a shadow, and never continueth in the same state" (Job xiv. 2). They are the effects of physical causes; bad health, weariness or accident may bring them on. They

are like a dull, cloudy day, on which no sun is to be seen, and everything looks black. You know that all this will pass off in due time if you only have patience to wait. So it is with mental perplexities and despondencies. "In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one" (Eph. vi. 16). What are these fiery darts of which the apostle speaks? Are they not the very perplexities and despondencies of which we have been speaking—which can only be extinguished by *faith*: that is, by a profound and constant *trust* in God's word?

Temptations of this kind, as I have said, must be looked for, since they belong to the natural condition of man on earth, and must be resisted just like any other temptation. The remedies against them are humility, prayer and patience. "Be subject to the Lord, and pray to Him" (Ps. xxxvi. 7). Those who are very humble easily escape from temptation. If we have a low idea of ourselves as compared with Almighty God, and properly realize that we are but dust and ashes in the presence of our Creator, and that the "Wisdom of the world is foolishness with God"—then it will be easy to accept things which are beyond our comprehension. It will not then seem strange that God's ways should pass our understanding. Again, if we felt, as we ought to do, that faith is God's gift, we should never fail in immediate recourse to Him when difficulties arise. He who gave our faith can alone defend it. The Gospel furnishes us with many examples of what we should do in such difficulties. "And immediately the father of the boy, crying out with tears, said, I do believe; Lord, help my unbelief" (St. Mark ix. 23). Here you have a specimen of the humility and prayerfulness by which to overcome temptation. Again, hear what St. Peter said when a difficulty was presented to him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known that thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (St. John vi. 69). This is the answer to all perplexities—"to whom shall we go?"—where else derive any light in the darkness that sur-

rounds us on earth, except from Him who has "the words of eternal life" ?

We must add patience to our prayer. Half our difficulties arise from the want of it. "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"—that was what the apostles asked our Lord. We, too, want to know *when* God is going to do this thing or that. He is "patient because He is eternal." "The Lord is a patient rewarder" (Ecclus. v. 4). We want to hurry things, forgetting that "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (St. Peter iii. 8).

There are the virtues by which Christians should defend themselves if attacked by temptations against faith, but they must also take care that such temptations are not brought on by their own fault.

When people make shipwreck of their faith, it is generally because they themselves have prepared the way for temptation. Sometimes, for instance, a man has indulged in an irreverent and rebellious tone of mind. He, perhaps, gives way too much to his own fancies—to his likes and dislikes—and so becomes over critical, and, perhaps, supercilious and intractable. It is not likely that any one can go on in this way very long without great danger. A slight temptation is sufficient to lead any one who is discontented and disloyal into open rebellion, just as a comparatively slight disease will carry off a person who is already in a bad state of health.

Dangerous temptations often arise, also, from the heedlessness with which people put themselves into occasions of danger, without any necessity. In these temptations, as in all others, it frequently happens that those who "love the danger will perish in it." We have to preserve the faith by a spirit of humility. St. Paul says: "Thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear;" and again: "For I say, by the grace that is given to me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety" (Rom. xi. 2—xii. 3).

A want of the "sobriety" of mind of which the apostle speaks is a serious danger for Christians. They

are "high-minded" and want to be "more wise than it behoveth to be wise," and therefore expose themselves to all sorts of unnecessary temptations out of mere curiosity and wilfulness, or because they are over confident in their own strength. We cannot wonder that such temptations are often fatal, and that people sometimes "make shipwreck concerning the faith" under these circumstances. The very spirit which leads them into danger renders them powerless to resist it.

Humility and the "fear" which the apostle enjoins upon us ought certainly to keep us from unnecessary dangers. Those who disregard danger, do so either because they do not value the things which they are exposing to peril, or because they have an exaggerated idea of their own strength. We cannot expect that God will grant special graces to people with these dispositions to save them from the peril they have sought.

The most frequent cause, however, of temptations against faith is an indifferent and sinful life. If a man has been leading a careless life and doing all that his faith told him *not* to do, he has plainly been preparing temptation for himself. What good has his faith been to him? What has he to show in return for the great grace given to him?

Let us remember, my dear brethren, the lesson which our Lord gives us in the parable of the talents. The master says to the wicked servant, who had hidden his talent in the earth, "Thou oughtest to have committed my money to the bankers, and, at my coming, I should have received my own, with usury. *Take ye away*, therefore, the talent from him . . . from him that hath *not*, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away" (St. Matt. xxv. 28).

Is not this often the explanation of people losing their faith? Is it not because God has withdrawn His grace from those who did not make any good use of it?

I must now speak of some of the things which are special dangers at the present day.

The first of these dangers undoubtedly is *ignorance of religion*. It is possible, perhaps, to keep the faith with very little knowledge in some countries, and under some

circumstances—but certainly not here in England. You are likely almost every day to hear arguments and difficulties, and plenty of false statements and slanders against your religion. How can you possibly defend yourselves if you know nothing about the questions that arise? The apostle tells us that we ought to be able to “give an account of the faith that is in us;” and if you have not a word to say, it is not only rather a scandal to others, but may be disastrous to your own faith.

In spite of this, it is strange to see the small amount of pains which people take to learn their religion—or to teach it to their children. Perhaps it is that they think such knowledge will come by instinct! You will often find neglect of this sort not only amongst the poor, but amongst rich and highly educated people. You see some parents who are most anxious about the education of their children—they would have them learn everything under the sun—arts and sciences—languages without number, and all the accomplishments that money can procure;—and yet these same parents will leave their children with a very imperfect and superficial knowledge of their faith. The reason is obvious: they have given less time and trouble to religious instruction than to the most insignificant branch of worldly education.

The knowledge of your religion, my dear brethren, will *not* come of itself either to yourselves or your children. St. Paul says: “Faith, then, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. x. 17). It is a great duty to learn your faith properly, and a sin not to know it.

There are, of course, several sorts of ignorance, which differ very much in importance. Some truths are necessary for us as the very means of saving our souls. You must know the great truths of religion if you are to get to heaven. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him” (Heb. xi. 6). If you do not know these truths, you are not in a state to receive any of the Sacraments, or make use of any other means of grace. It is clear also that you must know the nature of the Sacraments you have

to receive. If you are not sufficiently instructed to be able to make proper use of the appointed sources of grace, you are, in some degree, cut off from the means of salvation. It is plain that ignorance of these is the greatest of all faults, if it is wilful or careless ignorance, and that it is the greatest of all misfortunes if it is unavoidable. Again, there are other things which everyone is bound to know by God's command—so that it is a grievous sin to be ignorant of them, even when they are not actually necessary as means of salvation.

For example, everyone is bound to know the things commanded for God's worship—that is, to understand in what manner he is to worship God. If he does not take the trouble to be properly instructed in his duty to God, he is plainly guilty of a great sin. Besides this, everyone is bound to understand the duties of his own state of life. If you are in a condition of life to which important duties are attached, and you do not take any trouble to learn what these duties are, and how they are to be performed, it is clear that you are living in sin.

Besides these cases in which ignorance is distinctly sinful, it is clear that an imperfect, inaccurate knowledge—a knowledge not in proportion to your knowledge of other things, that is, to your general education—must always be more or less sinful, and must constantly place you in situations of great danger to your soul.

It may be well to consider for a moment the sort of religious knowledge which Christians generally ought to have.

It is clear every one ought to know the Catechism. People sometimes think this is merely meant for children; but in reality it is taught to children that they may have in their minds accurate forms of words which they will be able to understand as they grow older. If you forget the Catechism when you grow up, and never think of the meaning of it, what is the use of having learned it? As you advance in life you can understand it much better than you could when you were young, if you will only think about it. Besides this, you ought to learn accurately the grounds of faith, so as to understand not only what you believe, but your

reason for believing it. If you have not some intellectual hold of the faith, you are at the mercy of the first person who chooses to put difficulties; and it is always an easy thing to make objections. You sometimes find Catholics, for instance, who have a very imperfect idea of the principles of the Church's authority. When this is the case it is not wonderful if a trifling difficulty or a small objection disturb them. St. Paul tells us that the Church is the "pillar and ground of truth" (1 Tim. iii. 18); and the "testimony, teaching, and authority" of the Church are the guide of our faith. Those who do not properly understand the authority on which their faith rests, and which is the key to all difficulties, must naturally find it hard to meet objections. Besides the grounds of faith, we all ought to know and to study the *principles* and *maxims* of the Gospel. The Christian faith has its own principles and maxims, which are very different to those of the world. You cannot be a good Christian without being acquainted with these maxims.

You ought also to be familiar with the life of our Lord. The very meaning of Christian is "follower of Christ"—that is, one who imitates the example of Christ. St. Paul says: "For I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). What sort of a Christian would you call a man who knew little or nothing of the history of our Lord, of His words and His deeds, or of His sufferings?

The Church grants a great many indulgences to such devotions as the Rosary and the Stations, because these devotions lead people to study the life of our Lord. The Rosary is a series of meditations on the different events in the life and death of our Saviour. It is divided into three parts—the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries. In these three sets of meditations we go through the whole of our Lord's life—His early life, His Passion, and, finally, in the Glorious Mysteries, His resurrection and ascension. This course of meditations is made twice every week by those who habitually recite the Rosary. The Stations take us in a more de-

tailed and minute manner through the principal part of our Lord's passion. It is plain that the Church urges us to these devotions in order that we may know Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

All these different branches of religious knowledge require, first, to be carefully learned, and then diligently kept up. The Gospel says: "But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" (St. Luke ii. 19). It is necessary for us, also, to learn the truths of religion, and then through life to "ponder on them in our hearts."

I must now speak of the danger to faith from bad company, dangerous employments and irreligious books. We cannot expect to go through life without meeting dangerous occasions of this sort, and we ought not to be afraid of them when they are unavoidable. It is quite a different thing, however, when people seek out occasions and are fond of exposing themselves to them. Take the example of St. Peter. He went into the company of our Lord's enemies without the slightest necessity: "And with them was Peter also standing and warming himself" (St. John xviii. 18). And the consequence was that he denied Christ. The *next* time that he came before the enemy was when they "laid hands upon him, and dragged him before the tribunal of the chief priests." *Then* he answered: "We ought to obey God rather than men," and when the apostles had been scourged and charged not to speak at all in the name of Jesus, "they went away from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v. 29). Nothing can show us more clearly the difference between dangers which it is our duty to face, and dangers which are of our own seeking.

You cannot keep the company of irreligious people, and be fond of their society, without running into great danger to your faith. The very tone of mind which takes you *unnecessarily* into such company is in itself a danger. There is a fine show of being "liberal," and not "bigoted," in all this, which is a great attraction to many people, but common sense and experience point

out the danger. Anyone who habitually puts himself into such occasions, runs very great risk of losing his faith.

The same applies quite as strongly to reading dangerous books. At the present day you will come across a great deal of irreligious and even infidel literature. If you read books of this class without any reasonable ground—just out of curiosity and for amusement—they are certain to become dangerous temptations against faith. Such books *ought* to be offensive and disagreeable to you ; and if not, they are sure to be dangerous.

If your profession or position in life obliges you to study works of this kind, you need not be afraid of them. Brace yourself up to encounter the danger in the spirit of faith, and you may rely upon it that God will give you grace to resist any temptation that may arise ; but do not seek such dangers unnecessarily.

Another way in which people sin against their faith is by entering upon dangerous employments without any real necessity. If, for example, you take a situation which you know will perpetually bring you into contact with irreligious people, and at the same time prevent you from attending properly to your religious duties, you can hardly hope that your faith will not suffer. You sometimes find people who will take a house in a place where they cannot hear Mass on Sundays, and can scarcely ever approach the Sacraments. They do this, perhaps, to save a little money, or to get some small worldly advantage, and they hardly take the trouble to think of the great danger in which they are placing themselves.

Is it to be expected that Almighty God will give them special graces to preserve the faith when they seem to care so little about it themselves ?

It is still worse and more lamentable when people act in this way by their children. It is, of course, a great object for parents to get their children well placed out in the world ; but, in doing so, they must not lose sight of the most important of all considerations—their religious welfare.

If, for a little extra gain, you place your children in

situations where it will be almost impossible for them to practise their religion—in places where, perhaps, they will hear their faith scoffed at and themselves ridiculed for attending to their duties—how will you answer for it before God? If your children lose their faith it will be their loss and misfortune; but you, too, will have to account for it at the day of judgment.

I have now mentioned some of the special dangers against faith, which, as Christians, you are bound to avoid. These are, as I have said, ignorance of your religion and dangerous occasion—that is, dangerous company, dangerous books and employments, which prevent you from giving proper attention to the practice of your religion. It is by such things as these commonly that men “make shipwreck” of their faith.

There is another and still more common danger, to which I alluded before. Those who fall away from the faith almost always prepare the way by a careless life. If a man lives in habitual disregard of all that his faith teaches, it is not very wonderful that he soon loses his faith. He is living, perhaps, in mortal sin, and keeps on hardening his heart against God. By and bye he begins to lose sight of God altogether—that is to say, God has withdrawn from him and left him to himself. “Forty years was I offended with that generation, and I said: these always err in heart, and these men have not known my ways: so I swore in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest” (Ps. xciv. 10).

That is what Almighty God said of the Jews, and it is what He says of many Christians. After a time they reach the appointed limit of God’s forbearance, and then He “lets them go according to the desires of their heart” (Ps. lxxx. 13).

The first idea of the faith is that of the presence of God, and of our responsibility to Him. We cannot go on very long ignoring this responsibility, and paying no attention to God’s presence, without at last ceasing to believe it. This is the way in which men generally lose the faith. They have prepared for a fall by neglect and

disobedience and dangerous occasions, and, should it come, they have only themselves to thank for it.

On the other hand, if we want to strengthen our faith, and to prepare to meet the dangers we may have to encounter, we ought to cultivate the sense of God's presence. "Walk before me and be perfect." These were God's words to Abraham. We "walk before God" by remembering His presence. If you are in the habit of every day entering God's presence by meditation, you need not fear any danger. The few minutes you spend face to face with Almighty God, by which you renew your sense of His presence, and of your responsibility to Him, are a sovereign remedy against all kinds of temptations, and specially against the trials to which your faith may be exposed during the day.

And now to conclude, my dear brethren. Your faith is the best of all God's good gifts to you. It is a gift purchased for you by the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a gift designed to give "joy and peace" here on earth, and to conduct you to everlasting rest. Such a gift needs to be taken care of, and it is your first duty to take care of it.

You can only do this by diligently keeping up the grace within you. "Neglect not the grace that is in thee" (1 Tim. iv. 14). This was St. Paul's admonition to St. Timothy, and it applies to all Christians. Keep in the grace of God, and walk before Him, and you need not be afraid of losing the faith. On the other hand, if you disregard this precious gift which has been bestowed on you, it may be taken away from, and then you will be without excuse before God. Something may, perhaps, be said for those who have had no opportunity of knowing the faith; but what shall be said of those who received it, and lost it by their own fault? "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than, after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment, which was delivered to them" (2 St. Peter ii. 21).

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON VIII.

On Superstition.

“Is there not a God in Israel, that ye go to consult Beelzebub the god of Accaron?” (4 Kings i. 3).

THERE are several other sins against the First Commandment which require special attention. The Catechism mentions one class of sins in this way: “All dealing with the devil, and superstitious practices, such as consulting spiritualists and fortune-tellers, and trusting to charms, omens, dreams and such like fooleries.”

In the first place, dealing with the devil: It is clear that any kind of wilful and direct dealing with the devil is always a grievous sin. To make any sort of compact or agreement with God’s enemy, by which you are to get assistance from him, is plainly a treason against God.

It is, indeed, worshipping the devil instead of God, or, at least, trying to unite the worship of God with the worship of the devil. We cannot join these two services together, and it is treason to attempt it. It was the actual or implied devil-worship which made the great abomination of idolatry. The Psalmist tells us that: “All the gods of the Gentiles are devils” (Ps. xcv. 5); and St. Paul says: “What fellowship hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial . . . and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor. vi. 14); and in another place he says: “The things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils, and you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils” (1 Cor. x. 20). It was by trying to join these two worships that the Philistines brought down upon themselves the anger of God. “And the Philistines

took the ark of God, and brought it into the Temple of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And when the Azotians arose early the next day, behold ! Dagon lay upon the ground before the ark of the Lord : and they took Dagon, and set him again in his place. And the next day, again when they rose in the morning, they found Dagon lying upon his face upon the earth before the ark of the Lord : and the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands, were cut off upon the threshold . . . and the hand of the Lord was heavy upon the Azotians : and He destroyed them " (1 Kings 5). To worship the devil, therefore, or to make any compact with him, is to renounce Christ, and as such has always been forbidden as one of the greatest of sins.

There is little fear of your ever being tempted to any direct worship of the devil ; but there is an *indirect* worship of which it is necessary to speak. This indirect kind of worship consists in the efforts people sometimes make to obtain forbidden knowledge.

Men often have a foolish craving to know the future, or to find out hidden things, which they cannot know by any natural means. To gratify this craving, they consult fortune-tellers, or go to spiritualists, or try some other plan to get supernatural knowledge. Now, if you think of it, it is plain that this is an indirect worship of the devil. You do not *mean* to have any dealings with the devil, true ; but you *do* mean to get knowledge, or something else you may want, from some power *beside* Almighty God. The good you hope to obtain certainly does not come in the order of nature. You are not using any *natural* means of knowledge, that is plain. Moreover, the good does not even profess to come to you from Almighty God. What can it come from, then ? It is obvious that if you get good at all, you are getting it from the enemy of God, or, at any rate, from some other power than God, and in defiance of Him. What is this but offering a worship to some demon ?

Generally speaking, when people do this sort of thing—that is, when they consult fortune-tellers, or try to find out what is going to happen to them by cutting cards,

or in some other foolish way—when they do all this, they have no idea of consulting the devil or paying homage to him. They would not do so for any consideration. Such things are generally done out of levity, and without any thought, and, perhaps, more in joke than with any serious purpose. There is always, however, something wrong and sinful about them, and they often enough lead to disastrous results. A person goes to a fortune-teller and hears something, true or false, about the future, which Almighty God never meant him to learn. He certainly has not got any real light to guide his conduct; but very likely he has heard something which may make him miserable all his days. Perhaps God sometimes allows the evil foretold to come true, as a punishment; perhaps the very fact of always looking out for a misfortune has brought it about—however that may be, it often happens that the evil comes in one way or another.

We could not have a better illustration of this than the example of King Saul. He had fallen into disgrace with God, and, instead of trying to make his peace, he endeavoured to find out what was to happen to him by consulting the witch of Endor. He found out the future, it is true; but it was a dreadful future for him. This is the history given us in the Holy Scriptures. “Saul said to his servants: Seek me a woman that hath a divining spirit, and I will go to her. And his servants said to him: There is a woman that hath a divining spirit at Endor. Then he disguised himself, and put on other clothes: and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said to her: Divine to me by thy divining spirit, and bring me up him whom I shall tell thee. And the woman said to him: Behold thou knowest all that Saul hath done, and how he hath rooted out the magicians and soothsayers from the land: why then dost thou lay a snare for my life, to cause me to be put to death? And Saul swore unto her by the Lord, saying: As the Lord liveth, there shall no evil happen to thee for this thing. And the woman said to him: Whom shall I bring up to thee?

and he said : Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice, and said to Saul : Why hast thou deceived me ? for thou art Saul. And the King said to her, Fear not, what hast thou seen ? And the woman said to Saul : I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said to her : What form is he of ? And she said : An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul understood that it was Samuel, and he bowed himself with his face to the ground and adored. And Samuel said to Saul : Why hast thou disturbed my rest that I should be brought up ? And Saul said : I am in great distress, for the Philistines fight against me, and God is departed from me, and would not hear me, neither by the hand of prophets nor by dreams : therefore I have called thee that thou mayest show me what I shall do. And Samuel said : Why askest thou me, seeing the Lord has departed from thee, and is gone over to thy rival ? For the Lord will do to thee as He spoke by me : and he will rend thy kingdom out of thy hand, and will give it to thy neighbour, David. Because thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord, neither didst thou execute the wrath of His indignation upon Amalec. Therefore hath the Lord done to thee what thou sufferest this day. And the Lord also will deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines : and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me : and the Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines" (1 Kings xxviii. 7). These were the terrible words which the spirit of Samuel spoke to him in answer to his endeavour to find out the future ; and we may reasonably fear some such an answer if we are too curious to discover what God does not think good to tell us.

At the present day people try to gratify their curiosity about the future, and about hidden things, by having recourse to "spiritualists." These spiritualists profess to have communication with the souls of the departed, and to be able to get information from them. The common way in which the spirits are supposed to communicate with those on earth, as I dare say you know,

is by "spirit-rapping" or "table-turning," and other such devices. There is great reason to suppose that most of this alleged communication with the other world is all imposture and nonsense. In many instances it has been proved to be mere trickery, but still it does not follow that it is *always* so, and that there may not be a certain amount of truth in it. It is necessary, therefore, to remember that, *if* it is true, and *when* it is true, it is distinctly unlawful. We may never attempt to gain information except either directly from God, or by using the ordinary natural means He has placed at our disposal.

As an illustration of the unlawfulness of seeking information through other channels, I will quote the passage of Holy Scripture from which my text is taken : "And Ochozias fell through the lattices of his upper chamber which he had in Samaria, and was sick. And he sent messengers saying to them : Go, consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron, whether I shall recover of this my illness. And an angel of the Lord spoke to Elias, the Thesbite, saying : Arise and go up to meet the messengers of the King of Samaria, and say to them : Is there not a God in Israel that ye go to consult Beezlebub the god of Accaron ? Wherefore thus saith the Lord : From the bed on which thou art gone up thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die " (4 Kings i. 2).

There is another form of this sin of over curiosity about the future. There are some who do not actually consult fortune-tellers, but are always paying attentions to "omens and dreams." These omens and dreams are supposed to foretell the future ; and if you observe them, and are guided by them in your actions, you are trying to make use of unlawful knowledge. Before the Christian religion was known the heathens used to direct their conduct by observing the flight of birds and the appearances found in the bodies of beasts that were sacrificed, and so forth. These things were called omens. Nothing could be done till the omens were favourable, so that the most important affairs of life were regulated by foolish trifles, which everybody now laughs at. Something of this still remains in different

parts of the country, and you will often hear sensible people talk of this thing or the other being lucky or unlucky. It is lucky, for instance, if you see such a bird, or unlucky if such a beast crosses your path; it is lucky to do this and unlucky to see that! All these things are what the Catechism calls fooleries; but, if serious attention is given to them, they become very disastrous fooleries, and are sometimes the cause of much sorrow and sin.

The things I have been speaking of are supposed to be means of knowing the future or finding out hidden things. There is another kind of superstition, on which a few words must be said. "Charms and spells," as they are called, are means of getting some supernatural assistance. One person, for instance, has a sprig of a tree hidden in his clothes, another carries little objects round his neck or at his girdle to protect him against harm; a third nails a horseshoe over the stable-door to keep out evil influences. These things are called charms, and in different parts of the country you will find many such in use.

"Spells" are something a little different. They are forms of words supposed to produce a magic or supernatural effect when said under certain prescribed conditions.

Now let us ask, What is the harm of all this? Generally, such things are done without much thought or meaning, because it is an old usage which people like to keep up; in such cases you can only say it is not very wise, and it is best to let foolish practices drop quietly. If, however, you were seriously to attach importance to such things, and expect good from them, you would be doing wrong. You certainly do not expect any *natural* good to come from doing these things. What possible good *naturally* can come from a piece of a tree, or from a foolish form of words? You do not expect any good from Almighty God; you do not even mean to ask Him for anything, or apply to Him at all. If, then, any good *really* comes to you, it is clear that it must be granted by some power independent of God, and opposed to Him.

It is plain, therefore, that all these things, if carried out to their conclusion, involve something like a false religion, or worship of the devil.

But now I must answer an objection, which is often enough, made to the practices of the Catholic Church. People will say : “ You are very hard upon charms and so forth ; but, after all, are not the crosses and scapulars and medals which Catholics wear much the same thing ? ” “ If you carry about with you relics of the saints, are they not charms, just as much as sprigs of mountain-ash would be ? ” The difference in reality is perfectly obvious on consideration. You have about you the crucifix and our Lady’s medal, and you expect some kind of protection from them ; you expect it, however, distinctly and directly from God. By wearing these objects of piety you mean that you put yourself specially under the protection of God, and that you appeal confidently to Him for help. The things you carry with you have, perhaps, been blessed—that is, prayer has been made by the Church to God for those who wear them. If you place a confidence in these things you are, directly or indirectly, trusting to prayer, and expecting good from the power of God. Such a trust may become presumptuous, if it is not accompanied by proper dispositions: for example, if you were to persevere in a life of sin, and hoped to escape the punishment of your sins by wearing medals and crosses ; but the trust *in itself* is always right.

It is necessary to observe, at the same time, that prayers and the pious usages I have been describing may be used in a superstitious *manner*. For example, if you wore a medal and expected good to come from, say, the particular part of your dress in which you wore it, or if you said certain prayers and thought their virtue depended, not on the devotion with which you said them, but the order in which they were arranged, these would be superstitious practices.

I began by speaking of the grievous sin of any compact with the devil, or of any worship given to him. I will finish this part of the subject by saying a word about something which has a great analogy to worship of the

devil: I mean the conduct of those who are doing the devil's work on earth. There are, unfortunately, a great many who have made no compact with the devil, but pass their lives in doing his work of opposing God and promoting evil. People do this by giving scandal, and making others bad, and so taking away souls from Christ. Sometimes this is done through malice, with a real design of fighting against God: sometimes it is mere carelessness and neglect. Those who lead evil lives themselves, and are setting a bad example to their neighbours, are leading away souls from Christ by their carelessness just as effectually as if they actually intended to do so. It is plain that all those who are doing the devil's work on earth, either by design or by carelessness, are really his servants and worshippers, and can only expect some day to have their portion with him.

There are two other sins which come under the First Commandment. The Catechism tells us that: "All sins of *sacrilege* and *simony* are forbidden by the First Commandment." These are sins which are directly against the worship of God, by profaning and dishonouring things which belong to God, and to His service.

The sin of sacrilege is any act of violence against anything consecrated to God, or any insult offered to things used in His service. Any abuse of such things is plainly a great sin of irreverence against God, to whom they are consecrated.

There are three ways in which the sin of sacrilege may be committed. First, by violence to the ministers of God. Violence offered to anyone consecrated to God is not merely a sin against an individual, but is also an affront to Almighty God. We have an illustration of this in the Old Testament History. We are told that a man of God came from Juda to King Jeroboam as he was standing before the altar at Bethel burning incense. This prophet came with a message from God, and a prophecy, and "when the King had heard the word of the man of God, which he had cried out against the altar in Bethel, he stretched forth his hand from the altar

saying: Lay hold on him. And his hand which he stretched forth against him withered, and he was not able to draw it back again to him" (3 Kings xiii. 4). Here we see how God Himself miraculously avenged the violence that the King proposed to offer to the prophet who spoke to him in God's name. The honour due to God requires that those who are charged with His ministry should be treated with respect, not merely for their own sakes, but out of reverence to the office they hold. For this reason any act of violence against a priest is a sin of sacrilege, and is punished by the Church with excommunication.

The next kind of sacrilege is any offence offered to *places* consecrated to God. In the Old Law God chose His sanctuary upon earth, and consecrated it by the special display of His presence there. He deigned to call the Temple of Jerusalem His house, and to establish His mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies.

Any offence against this place was a sacrilege, and was one of the greatest crimes that man could commit. In the New Law we have in our churches a far more *real* presence of God than there ever was in the Jewish Temple, and any irreverence to the Church—for example, any crime committed in it—is, in some degree or other, a sin of sacrilege, by profaning a place sacred to the majesty of God. Here, again, we have an example from the Old Law which it will be interesting to give. This time it was Ozias, the King of Juda, who was punished for his sacrilege. He was a powerful king, and he had collected a large army, and succeeded in all his undertakings. "When he was made strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: and he neglected the Lord his God: and going into the Temple of the Lord, he had a mind to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And immediately Azarias, the priest, going in after him, and with him four score priests of the Lord, most valiant men, withstood the King, and said: It doth not belong to thee, Ozias, to burn incense to the Lord, but to the priests, that is, to the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated for his ministry:

go out of the sanctuary, do not despise : for this thing shall not be accounted to thy glory by the Lord God. And Ozias was angry : and, holding in his hand the censer to burn incense, threatened the priests. And presently there arose a leprosy in his forehead before the priests, in the house of the Lord, at the altar of incense. And Azarias, the high priest, and all the rest of the priests, looked upon him and saw the leprosy in his forehead : and they made haste to thrust him out. Yea, himself also, being frightened, hastened to go out, because he had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord" (2 Paral. xxvi. 16).

Here you have a King punished by the leprosy, in the height of his power, for a sin of sacrilege—for a double sin of sacrilege, we may say : first, for profaning the holy place by presuming to offer incense, and then for an insult to God's ministers by threatening the priests who warned him of his duty. There is still another sort of sacrilege which consists in making a profane use of holy *things*—that is, of things consecrated to God. Of this, also, there are a great many illustrations in the Holy Scripture. We read, for example, how Achan brought down the anger of God upon the whole people, because he took for himself a part of the plunder of Jericho, which had been solemnly consecrated to God. It is, then, a very great sin—a sacrilege—to offer any violence or profane usage to persons, places, or things consecrated to God ; and it is a sin which is sure to bring down, in a special manner, the anger of God upon those who commit it.

I cannot leave the subject without saying a word on the kind of sacrilege which is the most common amongst Christians. It is a sacrilege to receive the Sacraments unworthily. These are the most sacred things of all. They are the means of grace, and the channels by which the merits of the Precious Blood of Our Lord are communicated to men. If you receive one of these Sacraments unworthily, you are guilty of a sacrilege. If you make a bad confession, you are guilty of sacrilege ; still more, if you make an unworthy Communion, you

commit a sacrilege. If you do this you are, indeed, profaning the holy things of God—you are turning to His dishonour the most precious things He has given us for His own worship and the salvation of our own souls.

I have only now to speak of the sin of simony. This is one particular way in which the holy things of God are profaned. Simony means trafficking in holy things—buying and selling holy things. It is called by this name from the name of Simon Magus, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles. Simon had been a magician, but was converted to the Christian faith by the preaching of Philip. St. Peter came to Samaria and laid hands upon the new converts, and they received the Holy Ghost; “and when Simon saw that by the imposition of the apostles the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying: Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said to him: Keep thy money to thyself to perish with thee, because thou hast thought the gift of God may be purchased with money” (Acts viii. 18). It is a sin of simony to give or to take money in exchange for spiritual things. You must not think that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

It is a great offence against God to make holy things a matter of trade. You remember the indignation of our Lord against those who made the Temple a place for buying and selling. “My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.”

There is, indeed, something peculiarly odious and offensive of trafficking in holy things. It is, however, necessary to remark that in one sense it is not wrong to buy them. You may, for instance, buy or sell crucifixes or medals, or other objects of devotion; but, then, you must buy them simply for their value as so much silver, or as works of art, or for their history, or as archaeological curiosities, but not for the blessing or indulgences attached to them. There would be no harm in buying or selling a silver medal, but it would be a sin of simony if you sold it at a higher price, because it had been blessed by the Pope, or had some

spiritual privilege attached to it. The silver and the workmanship you may buy, but the blessing or indulgence you may not buy.

Again, it is not simony if you pay the usual fees on occasion of receiving some of the Sacraments. If, for example, you make a suitable offering to the priest when your children are baptized, you are not buying the Sacrament, but merely doing your duty by contributing to the support of your pastors in a way recognized by the Church.

Now to conclude : I have said how abominable in the sight of the Lord is anything like buying or selling holy thing ; what a terrible sin must it be to make your religion a matter of money ! This is one of the great dangers, however, to which a great many of the poor are exposed. There are never wanting tempters who are ready to seduce people from their faith by offering them money, or money's worth. Such people would buy the souls and consciences of men—and, unfortunately, many are to be found who will make a traffic of their consciences. Such people are ready to go to one Church or another for what they can get, and will sell their souls to the highest bidder. When once this spirit of self-seeking and looking for gain in religion takes possession of a man, it is, indeed, hard for the grace of God to produce any fruit in him. Whatever you may be, try at least to be free from covetousness in the service of God, and should a tempter ever come in your way, let your answer be : “ Keep thy money to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money ! ”

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON IX.

On Devotion to the Saints.

“Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (St. Matt. xix. 28).

THIS glorious promise which our Lord made to His apostles leads very naturally to a subject I have omitted—that is, to considering the honour and devotion which ought to be paid to the saints. It would hardly be necessary to speak on this subject at all, if it were not for the very undue importance attached to it by Protestants.

The thing is perfectly simple in itself, but we are surrounded by people who have taken up extraordinary misapprehensions and prejudices about it, and I must, therefore, go into the question carefully, so as to leave no room for misunderstanding. Protestants are very much scandalized at what they are pleased to consider the excessive honour paid to the saints, and are offended by the reverence shown to holy images and other memorials of Christ and His saints.

Acting upon this prejudice, they have thought it necessary to adopt a new division of the Commandments, in order to make stronger what was sufficiently strong already. They make the two parts of the First Commandment—“Thou shalt not have strange gods before me,” and “thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing. . . . Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them”—into two distinct commandments, whereas it is plain that, not to have strange gods and not to adore graven things come to the same thing, or, at any rate, that the one includes the other.

As I have said, there is no difficulty at all in the ques-

tion. I have already spoken of the supreme honour—the honour given to God alone, which no creature can share with Him.

It is manifest that besides this honour there *must* be another kind of honour—that is, *some* kind of honour which *can* properly be given to creatures. We read about this kind of honour in every page of the Holy Scriptures—if we wanted any authority for what common sense tells us. St. Paul says: “Render, therefore, to all men their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (Rom. xiii. 7). And St. Peter says: “Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God, honour the King” (1 St. Peter ii. 17).

These two sorts of honour are manifestly different in *kind*, not in *degree*; that is, one kind of honour is not merely *greater* than the other, but it is a different sort of thing altogether. The reason of this is that the honour given to God arises from feelings which we cannot have for any creature. We honour God because He is the original source and fountain of all being and of all good. “Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration” (St. James i. 17).

Every good thing that exists is from Him, and exists only through Him. “By thy will they were, and were created.” If we see and admire anything in creation, we know it comes from God, and that it is in reality only a faint reflection of His infinite beauty and grandeur. God made them and gave to them all their beauty, and it is by His power that they are preserved and kept in being. The Psalmist says: “How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with Thy riches. So is this great sea which stretcheth wide its arms: there are creeping things without number, creatures little and great. There the ships shall go. This sea dragon which Thou hast formed to play therein. All expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season. What Thou givest to them they shall gather up: when Thou openest Thy hand they shall all

be filled with good. But if Thou turnest away Thy face they shall be troubled: Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail and shall return to their dust. Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Psalm ciii. 24). God is not only the Creator and Preserver of all creatures, and the source of all excellence; but He also has infinite rights over *us*, since "He has made us, and not we ourselves." In feelings like this no creature can have any share, and if we are to honour them at all it must be on some totally different motives, and in an entirely different manner.

Let us consider for a moment what is the real ground on which we honour creatures.

Whatever position creatures may hold, we can only honour them on *one* ground—that is, *on account* of what God has been pleased to give to them, and in proportion to the extent and excellence of His gifts to them. Take any one of the creatures whom you think it right to honour, and you will see that you are honouring it simply on account of the physical, or the intellectual, or moral qualities that God has given to it; or, perhaps it is because of the *position* in which God has placed this creature amongst men—but, anyway, exclusively on account of God's gifts. You honour your parents, because God has given them that particular relation to you; you honour the Queen, because it is the will of God that she should reign over you; you honour heroes and sages, great thinkers and writers, because God has bestowed on them qualities above their fellow-men.

It is plain that the same sort of honour *must* be given to the saints, and for the very same reasons. The saints are those of all His creatures to whom God has given the choicest of His gifts. He has given them the greatest spiritual graces and the highest position, and He has made them His favourites; how can we possibly refuse to honour them? The honour is in substance exactly the same as the honour we give to all other creatures, and only differs accidentally in as much as it relates more immediately and directly to God.

If it is right and reasonable—as it certainly is—to pay

every honour to our Queen, because it has pleased God to set her to rule over us, and to endow her with qualities to make her worthy to reign—how, in consistency and common sense, can we refuse to give honour to the Blessed Virgin, whom God chose to be “blessed amongst women,” and whom He raised to the dignity of Mother of His Incarnate Son? If “He that is mighty hath done great things” for her, greater than were even done for any other creature, what right have we to refuse our tribute of honour and reverence?

In the same way, if it is right and reasonable to honour the heroes and sages of the world—those to whom God has given the power and talent to rise to eminence amongst their fellows—how can we refuse our respect to those whom, as our Lord tells us, are to “sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel”?

But people will say: *Honouring* the saints and servants of God is one thing; *praying* to them is another. Let us see. Is it anything *exceptional* that we should ask the saints for favours and get them? Is it not the *rule* throughout God’s creation that creatures should help one another and do good to one another, both in temporal and spiritual things?

The greatest part of the good things for body and soul which we receive comes to us through the hands, and by the instrumentality, of other creatures. The care and protection we require in childhood, the necessary nourishment for our bodies are given to us by creatures. So it is with our souls. A religious education, the greatest of all spiritual blessings, is given to us by creatures. It is our fellow men who teach, exhort, and supply to us the means by which we are to get God’s Grace. We know indeed that “all good gifts,” both spiritual and temporal, really come to us from God, but that does not prevent us from looking to our fellow-creatures for them. We do not hesitate to ask for favours, and we expect to receive them. Why, then, should people talk as if the idea of asking for favours from the saints, or getting them, were something very new and unheard of, whereas it is quite in the routine of God’s creation?

No one dreams of there being anything unlawful or unreasonable in asking for things from those in high places upon earth; on the contrary, you feel, at once, that receiving petitions and granting favours belong naturally to the position they hold. Why, then, should there be anything unlawful or unreasonable in presenting such petitions to those who are "reigning with Christ" in heaven?

But there are two objections which are commonly made against the Catholic practice of invoking the saints. The first of these is that by so doing we are interfering with the office of Mediator, which belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ; the other, that it is impossible for the saints to hear the prayers that are made to them in all parts of the earth.

You often hear Protestants quote the words of St. Paul: "For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5); or again: "And therefore He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of His death . . . they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. ix. 15).

All this is perfectly true. Our Lord is our only Mediator, and "there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby they may be saved" (Acts iv. 12). But, what has all this to do with prayer? We are to pray for ourselves and for our neighbours. If we pray for our brethren we are not thereby constituting ourselves mediators in place of Christ. Whatever is asked of God by Christians on earth, or by saints in heaven—whether for themselves or for others—is always asked for through the merits of our Lord. St. Paul, when he was on earth, was, as he tells us, perpetually praying for his converts, and begging them to pray for him.

Let us see what he says: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, that you help me in your prayers to God for me" (Rom. xv. 30). "Wherefore I also, hearing of your faith that is in the Lord Jesus, and of your love towards all the saints, cease not to give

thanks for you, making commemoration of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. i. 15). And again: "Grace be to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for you all, making a remembrance of you in our prayers without ceasing" (1 Thess. i. 2). It is clear that St. Paul never for a moment considered this mutual prayer to be any interference with our Lord's office of Mediator. He might pray, and he did constantly pray, whilst he was upon earth; why should he *cease* to pray for them when he finished his course and received his crown of justice? If his one great object on earth was, by labour and prayer, to win souls to Christ, is he likely to forget that object when he has entered into his reward and is reigning with Christ? If St. Paul and all other saints go on praying for Christians as they did whilst on earth, why may we not continue to ask their prayer, without in any way interfering with the special privilege of our Redeemer?

But, then, objectors will go on: It is no use praying to the saints, since they cannot hear petitions. Why should they *not* hear petitions? It is true we cannot understand *how* they are to hear; but then we cannot form any sort of idea of a spiritual existence. It is quite clear that the saints and angels in heaven know whatever God wills them to know of what passes upon earth. "There shall be joy before the angels of God over one sinner doing penance." It is clear, then, that God *does*, in some way, enable them to understand what goes on upon earth—even things concealed in the hearts of men. It would be difficult to find a better illustration of the sympathy and prayers of the saints than that given us by St. John. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them, and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time till their fellow servants and their

brethren, who are to be slain even as they, should be filled up" (Apoc. vi. 10).

I have spent some time in considering this subject, because we all ought to have a clear answer ready to give when required—but in reality the answers of the Catechism are so plain as not to need any comment. "It is forbidden to give to the angels and saints divine honour or worship, for this belongs to God alone." "We should pay to the angels and saints an inferior honour or worship, for this is due to them as the servants and special friends of God."

The Church in heaven and the Church on earth are bound together into one great hierarchy by bonds of mutual reverence and love, and by constant, unceasing prayer one for the other through the merits, and under the headship, of our One Lord and Mediator our Lord Jesus Christ. "You are come to Mount Sion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the Church of the first-born, who are written in the heavens, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of the blood which speaketh better than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 22).

There is another part of the subject which I cannot pass over hastily. The Catechism says: "We should give to relics, crucifixes and holy pictures an inferior and relative honour, as they relate to Christ and His saints, and are memorials of them." There is, I suppose, nothing in the Catholic faith about which more hard things have been said than the devotion to holy images. It would seem as if Protestants could *never* understand it—and yet it is in reality the most simple common sense that can be imagined.

Besides the "inferior honour" given to the saints, and also given—as I have explained—to people on earth in their degree, there is another kind of honour. This is called *relative* honour. It is clear that the honour you give to a man and the honour which you give to a picture are quite different. You honour a man because

of certain qualities which he possesses. You think he has talents or virtues, or he is in some distinguished position, or has made himself a name. A picture can have none of these qualities. If you honour it at all, it is only because it is the representation of some person for whom you entertain love or reverence. It is a "relative honour"—that is, an honour given a thing without life, *not* for itself, but to be *handed on* or *referred to* something else, which is *really* the object of honour. For example, if you pay honour to the crucifix, you certainly do not mean to reverence the wood or the metal of which it is made: you certainly do not mean to honour the beauty of the carving: the outward marks of respect you show are intended to express the love and reverence you feel for our Lord, whom the crucifix represents.

All this is seen in every-day life. Go into any house you please, you will be sure to find pictures of the Queen, pictures of parents or children, and others dear to the household. Such pictures are treated with respect, and sometimes with marks of tenderness. No one thinks of finding fault with this, or imagines for a moment that anyone will confuse between the pictures and those whom they represent. Again, we constantly hear of statues being solemnly unveiled; and, if the statue represents a sovereign, or someone loved by the people, you would not be surprised to hear of a great burst of loyalty and enthusiasm from the bystanders on the occasion. Common sense tells you that all the respect shown to the statue is *relative* honour: that is, it is meant not for the statue, but for the person whom it represents. It is only in religion that this common sense is laid aside, and people choose to imagine that because we show marks of reverence to the images of Christ and His saints, therefore we are making them objects of worship.

The feeling which Protestants, at the present day, have about holy images is not a new thing. In the early ages the Church had to suffer a long and bitter persecution from the Iconoclasts. Several of the Greek Emperors took the same view that Protestants now take,

and sent their soldiers into the churches to break and remove all the images of Christ and His saints.

A story is told of the Abbot Stephen which shows the reasonableness of the Catholic practice. The holy Abbot was brought a prisoner before the Emperor Constantine. The Emperor said to him: "Can you suppose that you are injuring Christ by trampling on the crucifix?" By way of answer the Abbot produced a coin with the Emperor's image on it. "What would a man deserve for trampling on the Emperor's image?"—the bystanders replied: "He would deserve the punishment of treason." The Abbot cast it on the ground and trampled upon it with these words: "If I deserve punishment for so treating the image of an earthly King, how much more should I deserve it if I dishonoured the image of the King of Kings?"

The only way in which the Emperor could answer this argument was by putting him to death. It is, indeed, unanswerable. Every one would feel that a mark of intentional respect or disrespect shown to his own portrait was really a mark of respect or disrespect shown to himself. The same principle obviously applies to holy pictures.

What I have said about images and pictures applies also to relics and other things without life. Relics are "*remains*"—that is, parts of the bodies of the saints, or things which they have left behind them on earth. It has been the practice of the Christian Church from the earliest ages to pay the greatest reverence to the relics of saints, and to look for favours from God on account of them. There are a number of instances given in the Holy Scriptures in which it has pleased God to work miracles by the instrumentality of relics of saints. For example, we are told that the prophet "Eliseus died, and they buried him. And the rovers from Moab came into the land the same year. And some that were burying a man saw the rovers, and cast the body into the sepulchre of Eliseus. And when it had touched the bones of Eliseus, the man came to life and stood upon his feet" (4 Kings xiii. 20).

Origen, one of the earliest fathers of the Greek Church,

says: "And no wonder if a saint sanctify, by the word of God and prayer, the food which we partake, when even the very garments with which he is clothed are holy. The handkerchiefs and aprons of Paul derived so much holiness from his purity, that when applied to the bodies of the sick, they drove away diseases and restored health: and of Peter, what shall I say, the very shadow of whose body bore with it so much holiness, that whomsoever, not he, but his shadow only touched, was at once relieved from every ailment."

The father refers to the account of St. Peter and St. Paul, Acts v. 14, and xix. 11.

The devotion to the saints, and especially to the Blessed Virgin Mary, is meant to be an assistance in the service of God. Devotion given to them is not so much taken from God to be given to creatures, but it is a means of raising our minds and hearts to Him. How can it be otherwise? Every saint shows forth in some degree the greatness and glory of God, and is, if we may say so, a faint reflection of His infinite majesty—"God is wonderful in His saints," the Psalmist tells us—and you cannot be devout to the saints, and admire their virtues, and ask their prayers without being led on to an increased devotion to Him from whom all their excellence came and who was the end of all their aspirations.

It is the same with holy pictures and other objects of devotion. The one end of them all is to make you devout to Almighty God. They are calculated to put you in mind of God and of your salvation.

The world is constantly calling away your thoughts to external affairs. You have business or amusement perpetually engaging your attention from heavenly things, and it is very hard for the best of us to remember them as he ought. St. Paul says: "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 1).

It is difficult to "mind the things that are above"—whilst the "things that are upon the earth" are so constantly and vividly presented before our senses, and any-

thing that tends to raise our thoughts to heaven is of value to us. It is very useful, therefore, for Christians to have about them, and to keep in their houses, things which are likely, from time to time, to raise their minds to God, and to make them think of their last end. It looks very bad in a Catholic household to see no outward sign of religion. If there is no crucifix, no picture of our Blessed Lady, and no external evidence of the faith and piety of those who live in the house, it is always to be feared that they are forgetting their faith or keeping it out of sight.

At the same time, you must not allow external things to become a hindrance to devotion. These things affect people differently: some feel a great need of outward helps to fix their attention; whilst others are not so dependent on them, and would be, perhaps, embarrassed by a great number of external objects. Let each one, then, use such things, so as to suit his own devotion, and to be a help, not a hindrance—always, however, taking care to keep within the ordinary usages of the Catholic Church.

It ought to be the great desire of all Catholics to follow not merely the letter of the law, but the spirit of the Catholic Church in all things.

If we do this, we certainly shall not be wanting in a tender and earnest devotion to the saints of God, or in confidence in their intercession. Especially we must learn to imitate the deep devotion to the Blessed Mother of God which the Church displayed on all occasions. Throughout the whole year we have a succession of beautiful feasts in her honour, by which the Church would urge us on to a constantly-increasing devotion to her.

We shall see that we cannot show too much honour to the Blessed Virgin if we will only consider how the Son of God honoured her by being "subject" to her in the holy house of Nazareth; that we cannot have too great a love for her, if we remember her as the one great object of our Lord's tenderest love on earth; and we cannot have too great confidence in her intercession when we remember that almost His last words on the

cross were to commend her to us as a Mother, and to commend us to her as her children: "Son, behold thy Mother; Mother, behold thy son."

I cannot conclude without saying one word about the most holy of all symbols—the cross. This is the one which leads us most directly to thoughts of our Lord Jesus Christ. If it is our desire to know "Jesus and Him crucified," we can do nothing better than be devout to His cross.

The sign of the cross has been the symbol of the Christian Church since the earliest ages; and we are proud that it is our distinguishing mark at the present day. St. Cyril says: "Let us not, therefore, be ashamed of the cross of Christ; but, even though another hide it, do thou openly seal it on thy brow, that the devils, beholding that royal sign, may flee far away trembling. But make thou this sign when thou eatest and drinkest, sittest or liest down, risest up, speakest, walkest—in a word, on every occasion; for He who was here crucified is above in the heavens." What St. Cyril said to the Christians of the fourth century is, my dear brethren, a suitable exhortation for us in the nineteenth.

In the crucifix you have not only this holy sign, but the figure of Him who sanctified it. Our Lord Jesus Christ made this cross the altar of His sacrifice. He made it the symbol of His victory, and from it He continually speaks to the hearts of men. "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself" (St. John xii. 32).

You can have nothing better to help you, my dear brethren, in the midst of turmoil and temptation, than the loving use of this most sacred image. If you have it constantly before you, and meditate on it with devotion, it cannot fail to raise you up above this earth, and strengthen in your hearts the love of that sweet Saviour whom it represents. Amen.

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON X.

On the virtue of Hope.

“They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall take wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah xl. 31).

I HAVE already had occasion, my dear brethren, to speak of the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, as being the worship of God—as being, that is, respectively, the worship of the intellect, of the desires and of the affections.

I have treated already of the virtue of Faith, but before concluding the First Commandment I must say something about Hope and Charity.

By the virtue of hope we make God our last end. I have spoken of this before, but it is so important that you will forgive my dwelling on it a little longer. To be a good Christian you must keep your last end before you, whatever may be the immediate object of your desires. You may have heard the story of St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier, which puts this thought of our real last end very strongly before us.

St. Francis was, at that time, a young man of great talents and high expectations. He had the world before him, and he was full of plans and aspirations. St. Ignatius listened with great sympathy to all his schemes for distinguishing himself, and when he had finished, gently said to him: “And then what do you propose?” “If I succeed, as I hope to do, I shall, no doubt, be able to obtain a distinguished professorship, in which I think I shall gain a high reputation.” “Yes, and then?” “Then there is scarcely any position to which I might not aspire.” “Yes, certainly; and then?” “And then?—why, I must grow old and die.”

This was the thought that converted St. Francis, and it is one you ought to have before your minds. When you have succeeded in your present plans to your heart's content, what next? and then?—and then? Then comes your *last* end, and that must be Almighty God—to see and enjoy Him for ever.

It is a terrible thing if a Christian ever allows himself to forget this end held out to him by God's goodness. It is an affront to Almighty God if you allow yourself to be so satisfied with the good things of this life as not to care much for, or be much interested in, the eternal inheritance He offers to you. It was one of the reproaches which God made against His chosen people, that "they set at nought the desirable land" that He had promised (Ps. cv. 24); and it is a still greater reproach to Christians if, as St. Paul says, "they mind earthly things," so as to forget the true promised land.

"We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (Heb. xiii. 14). The good things of this world, wealth, domestic happiness, learning, honour, the praise of our fellow-creatures, are only good as *means* by which at last we may arrive at the end of our creation.

The virtue of Hope includes two things—desire and confidence.

First, we must desire heaven. We say every day "Thy kingdom come." What a mockery it is to use these words if we do not keep up in our hearts any real desire of God's kingdom! The virtue of hope ought constantly to put before us the glories and beauties of that kingdom—"eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9).

We cannot understand the glory and happiness of heaven. They are of their own nature beyond our comprehension, because they belong to a state of existence which we cannot even imagine to ourselves. God has been pleased, nevertheless, to give us glimpses into His kingdom in the Holy Scriptures—as if the veil which hid its glory were lifted for one moment to fill our hearts with admiration for the glory and riches of the Master

we serve, and with a longing desire to "taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. xxxi. 9).

We must not take the visible things described to us too literally, but remember they are but the representation, in words which we can understand, of things which are beyond us.

St. John describes the court of heaven in these words : "There was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne One sitting. And He that sat was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine-stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats ; and upon the seats four and twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold. And from the throne proceeded lightnings and voices and thunders : and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And in the sight of the throne was a sea of glass like to crystal : and in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were four living creatures full of eyes . . . and they rested not day and night, saying : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. And when those living creatures gave glory and honour and benediction to Him that sitteth upon the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth upon the throne, and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before Him, saying : Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power : because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were, and were created " (Apoc. iv. 2). "After this I saw a great multitude that no man could number, of all nations and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands : and they cried with a loud voice, saying : Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients and the four living creatures : and they fell down before the throne and adored God,

saying : Amen, benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour and power and strength to our God, for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the ancients answered, and said to me : These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they? And I said to him : My lord, thou knowest ; and he said to me : These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple : and He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of them, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Apoc. vii. 9).

Again in another place, St. John gives us a beautiful glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem, as far as it can be represented to mortal senses : “And he showed me the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God ; and the light thereof was like to a precious stone : and the building of the wall thereof was of jasper stone, but the city itself like to pure gold, like to clear glass, and the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones . . . and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were, transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun nor moon to shine in it, for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof” (Apoc. xxi. 10).

Such, my dear brethren, is the sketch that the Holy Scripture gives us of the outward beauties and splendours of God’s eternal kingdom ; but these things are, after all only the outside. Who can make us understand the *essential* happiness which is enjoyed by the blessed inhabitants of this city? Who can tell us of the deep, unchangeable peace which possesses them?—of the

complete and unfailing joy with which they are filled ? "Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure, for with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 9). It is good for us, my dear brethren, to dwell on this true promised land which is before us, and to say with the Church : "O how glorious is the kingdom in which all the saints rejoice with Christ, and, clothed in white garments, follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." This is the vision which a Christian ought to have before his mind's eye, or, at least, not very far from his thoughts : and his aspiration ought to be like that of the Jews in captivity. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten" (Ps. cvi. 5). A desire of heaven as your last end necessarily includes a desire of those things by which you are to get to heaven. To say that you desire heaven and are making it your last end, and at the same time to care very little about the graces and favours of God by which you are to obtain heaven, is only a mockery. If you really want to gain any end, you are interested, and eager, and anxious about those things which lead you to it. So in spiritual things. If you care about heaven, you must also care about the grace of God, and have a great value for the Sacraments and other things which God has provided to help you to your salvation. Every degree of grace we receive in this life may lead to a corresponding degree of glory and happiness in the kingdom of God. If we keep the glory and happiness of heaven before our eyes as we ought, we shall be very anxious for all God's graces, for the forgiveness of our sins, for our perfection in virtue, and the other things by which we are "to make our calling and election sure" (2 St. Peter i. 10). The words of the Our Father, "Thy kingdom come," ought not only to be a prayer that we may ultimately gain heaven, but likewise a prayer for the perfection of that kingdom of God which is within us.

Hope, however, is not merely desire—it is also confidence. It is not merely a longing some day to reach heaven as our last end. but a confident trust that we can

obtain it by God's help. Under all circumstances Christians are bound to have this confidence. Being confident of this very thing, "that He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i. 6). God has begun His good work in you all, and you must always trust in Him to carry on this work, and complete it to the salvation of your souls. Times of difficulty and despondency will arise, and temptations be hard to overcome; in spite of all this, your feeling must be that expressed by St. Paul when he says, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

No temptation is more dangerous than that of despondency. All men are subject to it in some degree, but some feel it more than others. Times will come when everything around you looks black; when difficulties and temptations seem, for the moment, to be too great to be conquered. This is the trial of the virtue of Hope. If we give way to these feelings of despondency we are in great danger. This state of mind leads people to being reckless. They are tempted to say, "It is no use trying to be good, and it doesn't matter what I do." Against this temptation we must fight bravely.

You have to consider that such things are but a passing cloud after all, and the sunshine will come back. Nothing great was ever done without having to fight against discouragement.

Who are those who succeed in great enterprises? Those who will not be discouraged, but fight on in spite of difficulties. Look at all the great things ever accomplished. You will find almost invariably that they were carried through in spite of difficulties and obstacles which appeared to most people insurmountable. You constantly hear of holy men doing wonderful things with the smallest means against overwhelming opposition.

How did they succeed? Simply by perfect confidence in God and by never allowing themselves to be discouraged. Take, for instance, the example of St. Vincent de Paul. He was a poor priest, with neither position nor money; and yet he succeeded in filling France with

charitable institutions of every kind. Or, again, take St. Teresa. She was an unknown religious in a poor convent, and yet she contrived to carry out an immense work for religion in Spain. This teaches us the importance of a spirit of confidence and the necessity of never being cast down.

On the other hand, discouragement is the immediate forerunner of defeat. Take the finest army in the world, and allow it to be discouraged and hopeless. You are sure that it will very soon be defeated. All its valour will not be enough to protect it against the effects of despondency.

The same thing is true of our spiritual warfare. So long as we go on hopefully trusting in God and doing our best, we are *never* defeated; but the moment we despond we are in danger.

We have a far greater ground of confidence than any one can reasonably have in temporal matters, because we have a distinct assurance that we *can* succeed, whatever the difficulties may be: no matter what external difficulties your position may present; no matter how grievous your internal trials; no matter even how often you have fallen before. In spite of all difficulties, God's grace will make you virtuous, if only you choose to be so. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13).

You never can have trials half so terrible as those which assailed the martyrs in time of persecution. God helped them to bear these trials with constancy and joy, and He will help you also, if you will trust in Him as they did.

The great sin against the virtue of Hope is despair. This is the last crowning iniquity which a man can commit. This is an injury done to the infinite mercy of God, which always bids you hope, and by it a man formally gives up his last end. It is the one sin which makes all other sins irremediable. It was the despair of Judas that was his destruction. Even his treason might have

been forgiven, but his despair cast him away for ever at the very moment when his Saviour was suffering for him.

Despair is especially a terrible sin in Christians. We know clearly all that our Lord has done and suffered for our souls; we know that our salvation is purchased, "not with corruptible gold and silver, but with the Precious Blood of Christ." We know, moreover, that our Lord has promised *never* to abandon us, whatever our sins may have been: if, in spite of all this, we chose to cast away the hope of mercy and salvation, are we not inexcusable?

Christians do not often despair of their salvation, but in smaller things they frequently give way to a feeling very like it. For instance, a man has fallen many times into the same sin, or has several times tried in vain to break off an evil habit; then he says to himself: "It is no use trying to be any better: I have tried and failed, and I give it up." Or, again, he wants to gain some virtue for himself or to do some good for his neighbours; but the moment he is unsuccessful, or meets with a reverse, he gives up. What is this but despair in small things? It shows a want of that confidence which we ought to have in God's assistance.

There is another sin against the virtue of Hope, and that is the sin of presumption. By this sin men commit an injury against the mercy of God in a different way. Presumption may be described as an excess of Hope—as hoping too much. This, however, is not a correct way of putting it. We can *never* hope too much, so long as we hope in the right way. Presumption, then, is rather hoping upon wrong grounds, or having a confidence which we ought *not* to feel.

Let me explain this. If you are very confident of success, but your confidence is placed, not upon the mercy and power of God, but upon your own exertions, your confidence is presumption, not hope. You sometimes find people very active in good works and confident of success; they are ready to undertake great enterprises, and no difficulty appears to frighten them.

Perhaps they talk about the assistance of God, but what they *really* rely upon is their own activity and exertion. This is not confidence, but presumption. They do not think of the words of the Psalmist: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. cxxvi. 1). In such cases it often happens that things go wrong, and difficulties arise, and then you find that those who began their good works by trusting to themselves are thrown into despair and give up their efforts. "Behold the man that made not God his helper, but trusted in the abundance of his riches" (Ps. li. 9).

Those who are really relying upon God in what they undertake, are not to be dispirited by momentary failures and discouragements. It is one of the common faults of the age to trust too much to human means, and to active exertion, and to rely too little upon the help of God and the efficacy of prayer. This is shown in the external works that men undertake, and also in spiritual things.

People think that they can make progress in virtue and resist temptation by their own exertions. They do not say this in so many words, but they show it plainly enough by their acts. They do not hesitate to expose themselves to dangerous occasions, and hardly even think of praying earnestly to God to help them. In reality, they rely upon their own good resolutions, and their own strength, and have so good an opinion of themselves that they are full of confidence. What is this but presumption? Can we be surprised if God punishes men for this sort of presumptuous confidence by leaving them to find out their own weakness? "They that trust in the Lord are as Mount Sion" (Ps. xii. 61). "Blessed are all those that trust in the Lord" (Ps. ii. 13). The Holy Scripture is full of such passages. It is part of the dependence and of the worship which we owe to our Creator that in all things we should place our trust in Him. In spiritual things particularly—which immediately concern His favour—we should have an unbounded confidence, but a confidence resting upon His

power and goodness, and not upon ourselves. If we transfer this confidence to ourselves we are sinning by presumption, and our confidence becomes an offence against the virtue of Hope. Again, those are guilty of presumption who, although they are trusting in God, are trusting without any warrant. They trust in God when they have no right to do so—that is, when He has given them no reason to hope, but, on the contrary, has told them that they may *not* hope. For example: when people put themselves into unnecessary dangers, trusting that God will bring them safe out of the fire, they are guilty of presumption. If they could not help the danger, but were thrown into it in spite of themselves, they would have a right to trust, because God has promised to “make with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. x. 13). On the other hand, God has never promised to protect us in dangers of our own seeking. On the contrary, the Holy Scripture tells us that “He that loveth the danger shall perish in it” (Eccl. iii. 27).

Our Lord went into the desert, and after He had fasted for forty days, He allowed Himself to be tempted. In the course of the temptation He gave an answer which is the best possible rebuke to those who are presumptuous. The tempter said to Him: “If Thou be the Son of God cast Thyself down, for it is written that He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest, perhaps, Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him; It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (St. Matt. iv. 6). What words can better describe the conduct of those who sin by presumption: they are tempting the Lord their God. If you give way to a rash confidence in your own strength, and neglect to seek for aid from God, what is that but tempting God? Again, if you “cast yourself down,” by willingly putting yourself in the way of temptation, trusting to special graces which God has never promised to give, it is tempting God. If you neglect all the precautions that prudence requires of you, in the vain expectation that God will

in some wonderful way preserve you from the consequences of your folly, you are not exercising the virtue of Hope, but you are sinning against Hope, and “tempting God.”

The sin of presumption is committed in a more fatal way still by those who persist in hoping in God’s mercy in defiance of God’s own express words. A man, perhaps, is leading a wicked life and breaking all God’s Commandments; he goes on, day after day, adding sin to sin, and yet he will tell you that he relies upon God’s mercy. He chooses to form his idea of God’s mercy and justice from his own fancy, and not from what God has pleased to tell us of Himself. The Almighty tells us that He will “render to every man according to his works,” but *he* says God is too merciful to punish sinners. Our Lord tells us of Himself that He is a “hard master:” that is, one who will call His servants to a strict account, and “cast them into prison till they have paid the last farthing:” but sinners choose to think that these words mean nothing, and that they may disregard them under the pretence that they are trusting in God’s mercy. This is not confidence, it is presumption, because it is hoping, not *in* the promises of God, but against them.

One very common and melancholy example of this presumption is the conduct of those who delay their repentance, because they trust that God will give them plenty of time to amend their lives. They do not mean to die in the state in which they now are. Conscience tells them that they are very far from ready to present themselves before God’s judgment-seat, but they trust to the future. “God is merciful,” they say, and will give them time to repent before He calls them; and so they go on disregarding all the warnings that they receive. This, once more, is not trust in God—it is presumption. Our Lord has not only *not* promised to give them time for repentance, but He has distinctly warned them that He will *not* give them time. “Watch ye, therefore, because you know not at what hour your Lord will come” (St. Matt. xxiv. 42). “Have in mind, therefore, in what

manner thou hast received and heard, and observe and do penance. If thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee" (Apoc. iii. 3).

If, then, my dear brethren, you sin because God is merciful, or delay your repentance, or neglect to use the means which God has given you to obtain pardon for your sins, and to secure your salvation, you are not trusting in God; but you are sinning against God's mercy by presumption. Attend, therefore, to the words of the Holy Scripture: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day, for His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee" (Eccl. v. 8).

And now, my dear brethren, if you wish to please God, you must be diligent in exercising the virtue of Hope. You must have your last end always before your eyes, and never allow any earthly prospect, however brilliant it may be, to shut out the glorious vision of heaven. Let us, then, my dear brethren, "live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 12). "Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him the salvation of my countenance and my God." (Ps. xl 6). "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped: never let me be confounded!" (Ps. xxx. 2.)

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XI.

On Charity.

“If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema” (1 Cor xvi. 22).

WE have now come, my dear brethren, to the last and most perfect kind of worship which we can offer to our Creator—the worship of our hearts. Charity is the queen of all virtues, and gives lustre and perfection to all the rest.

It is necessary to begin by explaining the exact meaning of charity, because the word is used in several senses. By charity people commonly mean giving alms to the poor, or other good works of this sort. Again, the word is very often used to mean kindness and gentleness to our neighbours. Those who are kind and considerate in their manner of speaking about other people, and ready to make excuses for them, are called charitable. This common meaning is, however, only the *second* signification of the word.

The two precepts of charity are: “1st. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. 2nd. And thy neighbour as thyself.” Charity *first* means the love of God; and, secondly, that love of our neighbours which necessarily comes from the love of God—since we cannot really love God without also loving His creatures for His sake.

The love of God and the love of our neighbour are necessarily connected, and form the branches of the same virtue. “If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God: that

he who loveth God love also his brother" (1 St. John iv. 20). A true love for God implies, then, a love for our brethren, made to God's image. On the other hand, a love of our neighbour, which is not based on the love which we have for God, is not a Christian virtue at all, and ought not to be called charity.

Our Lord tell us that charity is the greatest and first Commandment—and it is therefore absolutely essential for our salvation. St. Paul explains this to us in these burning words: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal: and if I should have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing: and if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 1).

No good work that you can possibly do will avail if you do not give to God the love He requires. It is a common temptation with us all to value ourselves upon what we have done for God. Men presume upon their service; they have fought for the cause of God, and made sacrifices for religion. They have built churches and given alms; they come of a family that has always been faithful and loyal to the Catholic Church. Alas! this is just the spirit in which the Jews acted in our Lord's time: they were the children of Abraham, they were the heirs of the promise; they were zealous for the law; but St. John says: "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father. For I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (St. Matt. iii. 9). Almighty God has no need of us or of our work, and looks not to what we do, but to the affection of heart with which we do it. The Lord says to you: "Son, give me thy heart," and He will accept no offering in exchange for it. If you were to give your time and labour, and your money for the service of God, and for the good of religion, it would not be enough for your salvation, if you were not also trying to love God.

“If I deliver my body to be burned, and give my goods to feed the poor :” these are St. Paul’s words.

Any service of God which is not founded at least in the beginning of charity is only a mockery. The very name of Christian implies that you are a lover of Christ ; and therefore St. Paul may well apply to Christians the words I quoted above : “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.” The object of all the outward things we see in the Church is to lead us to love God better. All our prayers, and the Sacraments we receive, are for the same end—to help us to love God better than we do.

We talk about saints and about holiness. What is it that makes saints ?—and what makes one better than another ? Charity is the measure of the saints. We read the lives of the saints, and marvel at all the wonderful things they did. They gave up all things to follow Christ, and spent their lives of toil and self-sacrifice, and their lives were illustrated by miracles which made them the admiration of men. All this, however, was merely the outside—the mere indication of holiness, not holiness itself. What really made them saints was this, that they loved God more than others. Without this interior love, all the great things they did would not have availed to make them saints. The man that loves God the best is the greatest saint. It doesn’t matter whether he is a priest or a layman, whether he is a learned man or an ignorant labourer, whether he has done great works before men or has done nothing ; he who has the purest, deepest, and most perfect love of God is the greatest saint. Oh, my dear brethren, why do we not all try to love God better, since it is the short and simple way to sanctity !

Nothing can be really good without charity ; but *with* charity even the least thing becomes precious. “Who-soever shall give to drink to one of those little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, Amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward” (St. Matt. x. 42). What is it that gives excellence to this cup of cold water ? It is the charity that accompanies

it. It is so valuable because it is given for God's sake, "in the name of a disciple." It is so valuable because, although it is a little thing in itself, it is the act of a great interior virtue. Again, our Lord "saw the rich men cast their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in two brass mites. And He said: Verily I say to you that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast into the offerings of God, but she of her want hath cast in all the living that she had" (St. Luke xxi. 1). The widow's donation was more precious than all the others, because it came from a greater love—a love strong enough to make her sacrifice "all the living that she had." Whatever you do, however small it may be in itself, if only you do it for God's sake, and with a great love of God, is precious before God, and deserving of a great reward. Charity not only gives a great value to little things, but it also covers over all other defects. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins" (1 St. Peter iv. 8).

This does not mean that you can go on in sin, and cover over your sin by charity, because the very idea of charity implies that you are trying to avoid sin. What it means is that charity is incompatible with sin. If you really love God, your love will wash away all sin already committed, and will speedily overcome all the evil dispositions which are likely to lead you into sin for the future. A hot fire burns up everything, and in the same way a real burning love of God destroys past sins, present imperfections, and everything that can keep us away from God.

Christians commonly find it very hard to struggle against the weakness and evil inclinations of nature. They are conscious of a great number of sins, imperfections, and shortcomings which it seems to them they cannot avoid; they have many bad habits and natural faults which they find it very hard to cure. The real remedy for all this is charity. If we could only fill our hearts with a great love of God, all these impossibilities would disappear; the hard things would

become easy, and the painful ones pleasant. "The crooked would be made straight, and the rough ways plain."

We must now consider what *sort* of love this charity must be. It must be, as we have said, "with our whole hearts"—that is, we must love God *before all things*. If you were to pretend to give God the *second* love—that is, if you professed to love Him, but put Him *after* some of His own creatures, your pretended love would not be charity, but it would be a mockery and an insult. But you will, perhaps, say: "How is it possible for me to give to Almighty God a greater love than that which I am compelled by my very nature to give to my wife and children, or to my parents and dearest friends? Is it not hard to require such a love as this?" You are *not* required to give such a love as this. There are several sorts of love. The first is the love of *preference*. By this you deliberately, in your *will*, prefer one object to all others, and put it before all others, when they come into collision. Another love is the love of *benevolence*, by which you earnestly desire the good of another, and disinterestedly make the other's good your own. Besides this, there is the love of *tenderness*, in which your affections are sensibly touched, and by which you are sensibly drawn towards the object of your love.

We are absolutely bound to have for Almighty God the love of preference—that is, we must, with our deliberate will, prefer Him before all creatures. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (St. Matt. x. 37).

In these words our Lord insists upon this love of preference. If our love and duty towards God is opposed by even the nearest and tenderest feeling of affection we can have for creatures, we are bound to put this feeling on one side, and overcome it for God's sake; if we do not, we have no charity to God, but are preferring the creature to the Creator.

We are not, as I have said, required to love God

with the tender feelings which we give to earthly loves—because this is too hard for men generally. The saints, however, were not contented by love of preference, but gave to God all the warmest and tenderest affections of their hearts. They gave to Him the love of benevolence, and longed and thirsted for His glory—everything they did was for “the greater glory of God,” and they made Him their friend, to supply to them, even here on earth, the place of father and mother and kindred. We cannot all do this, still we must remember that God says to each of us: “Son, give me thy heart”—and therefore we must not be satisfied unless we are giving to Him something of the tenderness and warmth which belong to earthly love, as well as that supreme preference which is absolutely required of us.

I said before that love meant nothing without obedience. We must be careful not to be deluded by *mere* feelings. It is a beautiful thing, and may be a most profitable thing also, to have a great tenderness of feeling, and to be filled with emotion; but all these feelings, even if you have the gift of tears, are not real love, if you do not mean to keep God’s Commandments. “For this is the charity of God if we keep His Commandments” (1 St. John v. 3).

The way in which you keep God’s Commandments is the infallible test of real love. The man who is taking a great deal of pains to observe God’s law, to avoid sin and to do what is pleasing to God, however cold and dry his feelings may seem to be, is *really* the one who loves God: and, on the contrary, it is quite possible to have abundant good thoughts and emotions and *very* little real love.

There are, however, other tests of love which we may apply to ourselves. We say we love God: let us ask what love does in us? Every strong feeling that occupies the mind is sure to produce some external effect. This is particularly true of such a feeling as love. You cannot love anything, or hate anything, without being greatly influenced, in some way or other, by these feelings. If, then, you have a real love of God, and really mean what you say every time you repeat the Act of Charity,

your thoughts, words and actions will be greatly influenced by this love. It is impossible to love God and never to think about Him. "Where the treasure is, there also the heart is:" and if you have the love of which I have been speaking, it is quite certain that you must think about God pretty often. Consider, then, what place God occupies in your thoughts—how often every day you think about Him—and you have a pretty good test of the reality of your love. If you find that God is almost banished from your thoughts, so that you scarcely ever think about Him from one end of the day to the other, you have reason to fear that you are wanting in the charity you ought to have, and you should not be satisfied till, by increasing the time given to prayer and meditation, you have "enlarged your heart," and compelled it to turn more earnestly to the great object of love.

Again, it is impossible to love God and be very indifferent about His interests, and every thing that concerns Him. What are we to say, then, of those people who seem to be utterly indifferent about everything connected with religion? There are some, for instance, who seem to take no interest in the progress of religion. They hear of the struggles and trials of Catholics in other lands, or of the successes of missionaries in pagan countries, or of the building of churches and conversions to the faith in our own land, and they care nothing for all these things. There is a battle going on between good and evil. It has been carried on in every age, and rages with great violence in our own time. In every land men are fighting for the cause of God against infidelity, irreligion, and all the powers of the world. Is it possible for Christians to look on and be indifferent? Can they see all that is done without any strong feeling or interest in the matter? If so, can we reconcile this state of feeling—in ourselves or in others—with a real love for God? does it not look as if our love was mere words?

In the same way we can judge ourselves fairly enough by our conversation. If we really care about any-

thing, we are sure to have something to say about it. "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh." We find this in the ordinary affairs of life. You see people in their conversation coming back again and again to the subjects which really fill their hearts. Those whose hearts are full of this world and its vanities are always talking about them. They are quite taken up by the temporal objects on which they have fixed their hearts, and can hardly be brought to hear of anything else. So it is with all those whose hearts are very full of anything. They must speak of it. An exile away from his country—prisoners separated from their friends—find themselves compelled to speak of the things they have at heart whenever they have the opportunity. If we really love God, and have our hearts fixed upon "those things that are above," it is quite certain we shall show our feeling in the same way.

We are not always to be talking about God and holy things, but still it is very suspicious if we never have a word to say. If people carefully avoid all conversation on religious subjects, and are impatient of it when it is introduced, how can we believe that they really love God? Love, then, if it is real, must have a place in our thoughts, and must, sometimes at any rate, show itself in our conversation. More than that, it must show itself by what we do. "My little children," says St. John, "let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 St. John iii. 18). This is the way in which we test the regard which our neighbours have for us. We are not contented with mere professions, but we want friendship that is shown in action.

In the same way we can find out the value of the love we profess to have for Almighty God. What do we do for God? How much trouble do we take for His service? Are we prepared to make sacrifices of any kind for Him? Our Lord says: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend" (St. John xv. 13). It is not likely that the sacrifice of life will ever be asked of us, but we may very fairly test our love by asking

ourselves what sacrifices we, in fact, make, and what we are willing to make for the love of God. If we find that we are doing very little, and that we are not ready to do much, we cannot reasonably be quite satisfied that we have even the charity which is so essential for a Christian.

There is one more important test of the reality of love—perhaps the most important of all. This is the feeling we have about sin. If we have any real love for God we shall certainly have a corresponding hatred for His enemies—and sin is, we know, infinitely opposed to Almighty God. If, therefore, we love God, we shall hate sin. “No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other: or he will sustain the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon” (St. Matt. vi. 24). You observe that our Lord says “hate” the one if he loves the other. It is not sufficient merely to be calmly indifferent, and think that this state of mind is consistent with real love. The feelings of a Christian about sin ought to be that of hatred—and of fear—no mere indifference. This is best described by the words of Holy Scripture, “Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent: for if thou comest near them they will take hold of thee. The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men” (Eccl. xxi. 2).

This state of things is abundantly illustrated in the lives of the saints. Nothing strikes us more than the horror and hatred of sin which they displayed; not merely sin as threatening their own salvation, but sin in itself. Wherever it appeared—in themselves or in others—in friend or foe—they at once recognized it as a terrible and frightful enemy, with whom no terms could be made. Even the *name* of sin was odious to the saints, and it was impossible for them to come in contact with it without striving to destroy it.

What was the reason of this? What caused this hatred? The reason was that the love of God with them was so strong that it could not endure His enemy, and *must* hate it.

How very different is this from the feeling which animates a great many ordinary everyday Christians!

They do not mean, perhaps, to commit sin, but they are very far from having a hatred for it. You see numbers who seem to pass their lives in trying to compromise—they wish to be friends with God, but at the same time to be at peace with His enemies. They pass their lives with sinners, and shut their eyes to their sins; their desire is not to “flee” from sin as from the face of a serpent, but to ignore it and say nothing about it. What does all this show? It is plain that they cannot have any great love for God—they cannot love Him with “all their strength and all their mind;” if they did they would never attempt to assume the kind of “benevolent neutrality” towards His enemies which we observe.

The great proof, then, my dear brethren, of a real love of God is to hate sin—to hate sin wherever we find it, without being respecters of persons. If you really love our Lord, you must, for His sake, always fight against His enemies, thinking “diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself; that you be not wearied fainting in your minds, for you have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin” (Heb. xii. 3).

These, then, are some of the signs by which we can test the reality of the love of God which we profess to have.

And now, my dear brethren, it is your great duty to light up the fire of this love within your hearts, and to keep it always burning. Why should you not love God? You have plenty of capacity for love. You are always loving something—always fixing your affections upon some of God’s creatures, and often wasting a great deal of tenderness and generosity upon them. Why cannot you love that God from whom all their beauty and excellence came? What has the best of them to make you love it? Nothing but what was put into it by its Creator. Is it not sad to see men wasting all their affections upon creatures which never can satisfy their hearts, and yet not giving the least love to their Creator, who alone is really worthy of love?

But real charity must come from God. It is a fire which none but He can light up in the human heart. “I came to cast fire upon earth, and what do I desire

but that it should be enkindled?" Our hearts can only be warmed by that fire which our Lord came to bring upon the earth. This fire He will light up within us if only we allow His grace to work in our hearts. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5).

Charity, then, is the gift of God, but it is a gift He is ready to give to all. In Baptism He bestows upon us the *habit* of charity, which ought perpetually to increase in warmth during life. That "burning light" which was given to you at Baptism was the symbol of the love of God—the true light which you have to carry with you till "the Lord shall come to the nuptials." Your great duty is to keep up this light in your souls. You have to keep it up by using the means of grace which God gives you. Our Lord tells us of the ten virgins who had to watch with lamps in their hands. The one great duty of each was to provide the oil by which the lamp was to be kept burning. The lamps would certainly go out if they neglected to supply the oil. This is only too exact an illustration of what happens in the souls of Christians. God puts into their hands the lamp of Divine charity, but they neglect to supply the oil needful for it by diligence in prayer and the use of the Sacraments. The consequence is that the lamp of love within them is extinguished, and all that they may do without charity becomes "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

Charity, indeed, may be compared to the light. When the light appears, everything shines forth with whatever beauty it possesses; but the moment the light is gone, everything becomes black, and the choicest gold and pearls cannot be distinguished from the poorest clay. So charity is not only beautiful in itself, but it gives to every other virtue an excellence and supernatural beauty which nothing can have without its divine light.

And now to conclude, my dear brethren: you must love if you really mean to be Christians. Nothing will take the place of love. All other excellencies and good qualities are little without love; if you love not you are

lost. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema."

Charity is the greatest of all virtues—greater than faith or than hope. "Now, there remain faith, hope, charity—these three; but the greater of these is charity" (1 Cor. xiii. 13). It is charity that must give excellence to all that you do; it is charity that must cover over all the faults and shortcomings of your life, for "charity covereth a multitude of sins." Try hard, then, to love God; try constantly to put Him before all things; try to expand and warm your heart to Him, and to make Him your friend; try to love Him better each day, and to love not "in word and tongue, but in deed and in effect." And you *can* love God since God Himself is the very source and fountain of love, and He has given Himself to you for the very purpose of exciting your love and gaining your heart. He gave Himself to you once in His Incarnation and Passion, and He gives Himself to you again and again in the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood. Our Lord says: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments" (Apoc. iii. 18). The fire-tried gold which can be obtained only from the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the virtue of Charity. If only you can gain and preserve this divine love you are, indeed, rich; everything will then be easy. "I have run in the way of Thy Commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart" (Ps. cxviii. 32), says the Psalmist. If only your heart is enlarged with the love of God, no trials or difficulties will be able to prevent you from arriving at the end of your being, which is "to see, love, and enjoy God for evermore;" "for I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38).

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BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XII.

On Oaths and Vows.

"Vow ye, and pay unto the Lord your God" (Ps. lxxv. 12).

I now come to treat of the Second Commandment. The special object of this Commandment is to secure the proper *reverence* due to Almighty God—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." This is a matter of great importance, since the very foundation of all religious feeling is reverence. If once you lose the feeling of reverence for God, and become careless and disrespectful of heart towards Him, you have very little religion left. For this reason the Holy Scripture says: "Give me not over to an irreverent and foolish mind" (Eccl. xxiii. 6).

But this irreverent and foolish mind is almost certain to follow from carelessness of speech. If you allow yourself to speak slightly and irreverently of God and holy things, to make free with them and have them frequently in your mouth, you are sure to fall into the spirit of irreverence. The utterances of the tongue come from the heart, it is true, but very often the tongue carries the heart with it. Carelessness of tongue develops irreverence in the hearts of those who are guilty of it; and, moreover, it spreads irreverence amongst those who hear its utterances. We cannot, therefore, wonder that God has given to men the distinct Commandment to honour His Holy Name.

There are two ways in which God's name may be "taken in vain," and I must speak of them separately. The first of these is by swearing unlawfully by the name of God, and under this comes all the sins which men commit by oaths and vows. The Catechism tells us that we are commanded by this Commandment "to keep our

lawful oaths and vows," and that it forbids "all false, rash, unjust, and unnecessary oaths."

An oath means calling God to witness. St. John says: "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater" (1 St. John iii. 9); and calling God to bear witness to the truth is clearly the most solemn possible way in which a man can confirm what he is saying. To do this "in vain"—that is, to do it falsely or foolishly—is the greatest possible disrespect. Listen to our Lord's words: "But I say to you not to swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King: neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, yea, yea, nay, nay, and that which is over and above these is of evil (St. Matt. v. 34). St. James enforces this lesson by saying: "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven nor by the earth, nor by any other oath.

"But let your speech be, yea, yea, nay, nay, that you fall not under judgment" (St. James v. 12). These words point out the evil of bringing the name of God into ordinary affairs. "Let your *speech* be yea, yea." It is an affront to the Almighty to call upon Him in trifling matters. Such a reference to God can only lawfully be made on some great emergency, or for the good of society. In these cases, however, it is quite lawful to call God to witness. To do so is, indeed, a solemn act of religion. When men refer to Almighty God on all great and important occasions, and make His presence and His truth the last court of appeal between one man and his fellow-men, they are recognizing Almighty God in a way which is quite suitable to every feeling of reverence and religion. The Psalmist says: "The King shall rejoice in God, and all that swear by Him shall be praised" (Ps. lxii. 12). During the Passion the High Priest addressed our Lord with the words: "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God." And Jesus, although He had before been silent at once replied to this adjuration—in

acknowledgment, it would seem, of the appeal to the Most Holy Name of God.

As a general rule, the only lawful occasion for taking an oath is when it is required by some public authority. There are two sorts of oaths in common use at the present day—oaths of office and oaths for evidence. These we may call promissory and declaratory oaths. If a man is made a judge, or accepts any public office of trust and importance, he is generally required to take an oath. For example, all members of Parliament, and those who have posts of authority under Government, have to take an oath of allegiance to the Queen, and an oath that they will conscientiously perform the duties of their office according to the law. These are promissory oaths. Those who take them make solemn promises, and call upon God to be surety for them that they will keep their word. They pledge, as it were, the truth of Almighty God to the performance of their promises.

The same sort of oath is taken by all those who are obliged to serve as jurymen. They promise to give their verdict conscientiously, according to the laws of the land, and according to the evidence. If a man takes an oath of this sort, and then breaks it—that is, if he goes against his conscience, and against the laws he has promised to observe, it is clear that he is offering a great affront to Almighty God, whom he has called upon to witness his oath.

The most common form of oath, however, the one which we may be required any day to take, is a declaratory oath, or oath of evidence, in a court of justice. The form of this oath is that you call upon God to witness that you will speak “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” This means that you will not only tell the truth, but that you will not wilfully keep back any part of the story, or add anything untrue, to give a different character to the evidence you have been giving. The oath concludes with the words, “So help me God”—that is: “May Almighty God help me if I speak the truth, and may He refuse His help if I do not.” It is the custom then to kiss the Bible, to express that you are willing to rest your hopes of the blessed promises con-

tained in that book, on your truthfulness. No act can be more solemn or serious than this calling God to be a witness to your evidence.

It does not matter what is the exact *form* in which the oath is made—whether, for instance, you swear on the Bible, or swear on the cross, or take your oath in any other way. The essence of it is that you solemnly call upon your Creator, the God of truth, to bear witness to what you say. If you do this, and then speak untruly, that is, take a false oath, you are guilty of a very great crime. Perjury is *always* a mortal sin, if wilfully and deliberately committed. It is no use saying that it was only about a small matter. The sin of perjury does not depend upon the importance of the question at issue, but upon the insult offered to God by calling upon Him to be witness to a lie. It is no use to say that you meant well in what you did. Some people have a notion that it is no harm to say what is untrue, or to conceal the truth in a court of justice, to get some one out of trouble. This is a very great mistake. You have no right to commit such an offence against God—to offer Him such a public insult, either for your own advantage or that of your neighbours. Men have no right to do what is wrong and sinful, however great the good may be that they expect from it. We have to do our own duty conscientiously, and we must leave the consequences to Almighty God.

Perjury means taking a false oath: swearing to something which you do not *know* to be true. Besides this, there are many other ways in which God may be called upon “in vain.” The Catechism speaks of rash, unjust, and unnecessary oaths. If you swear unjustly, or without consideration or necessity, it is taking God’s name in vain. For example, we read in the Holy Scripture that “some of the Jews gathered together and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul” (Acts xxiii. 12). This was a rash oath, because they had no certainty that they would be able to keep it—and, in fact, St. Paul escaped out of their hands.

This oath, however, was not only rash, but it was also unjust. These men swore to commit a great crime, and their oath, therefore, in itself, was wrong. What is to be done if a person swears to do something wrong? This is a question which sometimes arises, and about which people make false consciences for themselves. "I have sworn never to be reconciled to an enemy"—"never to speak to such and such a person again;" "I have sworn to be revenged for such an injury," and so forth. You must remember that no oath can *ever* oblige any one to do wrong—to do even the *smallest* wrong. If you have sworn to do wrong, you were guilty of a sin by taking the oath; but you are *not* bound to keep it—or, rather, it would be another sin if you did. No obligation that can ever be laid upon any one can oblige him to commit even the smallest transgression against the law of God.

A not unfrequent example of this mistake at the present day is that people sometimes fancy they are "bound by oath" not to listen to arguments in favour of the Catholic religion—or not to embrace it. It is obvious that a hundred such oaths would simply go for nothing and be without force. The moment a person felt that he had reasonable ground for suspecting that the Catholic Church was the true Church of God, he would be bound to inquire; and, if his inquiries led him to conviction, he would be bound to embrace the Catholic faith. No possible obligation which a man could take upon himself could for a moment oblige him to shut his eyes to the light, or justify him for so doing.

The reverence we have for the Sacred Name of God ought, then—first, to keep us from ever taking any oath without real necessity; and, secondly, it ought to give us the highest idea of the sanctity and inviolability of that most solemn ceremony by which we call upon our Creator to bear witness to what we say. "A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house. And if he make it void, his sin shall be upon him; and if he dissemble it, he offendeth double; and if he swear in

vain, he shall not be justified: for his house shall be filled with his punishment" (Eccl. xxiii. 12).

The Second Commandment is also violated by breaking vows. A vow is a solemn promise made to God. It is necessary, however, to remark that every promise is not a vow. We are constantly promising things to Almighty God. When you go to Confession, for instance, you make promises of amendment, and so forth. We can hardly fancy any very fervent prayer in which we do *not* promise something or other. Promises of this kind are not vows, because a vow is not only a promise, but a promise by which we take upon ourselves some *fresh obligation*. People sometimes, out of devotion, make vows to say certain prayers, or to give alms, or to adopt some particular state of life. When they do this, they mean, of their own free will, to bind themselves to a duty—by an obligation which did not before exist. In promises of the *other* sort, which are so frequently made, people, no doubt, mean what they say, and intend to keep their promises, but they do *not* mean to bind themselves by any fresh tie, and therefore they do not make vows.

A vow, of its own nature, is a very high act of religion. You make an offering of some good act to Almighty God, and permanently, or for a fixed period, you give up your own will in the matter, and put it out of your own power to retreat.

We constantly find instances of vows in the Old Law, and they were recognized as a regular part of the worship of God. "Offer unto God the sacrifice of praise, and pay thy vows unto the Most High" (Ps. xlix. 14). For example, we read of the Patriarch Jacob, that He made a vow, saying: "If God shall be with me and keep me in the way by which I walk, and give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, and I shall return prosperously to my father's house: the Lord shall be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a title shall be called the house of God, and of all things thou shalt give me I will offer tithes to thee" (Gen. xxviii. 20). Here we have an example of a vow. The Patriarch

binds himself to do certain things if it shall please God to grant him the favours he is asking for.

The same has been the practice of the Christian Church, and it is a very common and reasonable thing to undertake such obligations—either out of gratitude for favours received, or in the hope of obtaining special graces from God.

Such things, however, must be undertaken with great caution. “If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it, for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him; but, whatsoever thou hast vowed, pay it. And it is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised” (Eccl. v. 3).

It is a very great disrespect to God and a serious sin to break a vow, and, therefore, people should never make vows, especially vows intended to be binding for life, without taking advice on the subject.

It may happen, however, that a person has made a vow and then finds it very difficult to keep it: what is to be done? In such cases the right and necessary thing is to obtain a dispensation. If you had bound yourself to some one on earth, and found it hard to keep your promise, you would ask the person to whom you had made the promise to free you from it, or let you do something else instead. It is just the same thing with vows. The authorities of the Church stand, by God’s appointment, in His place in such matters; and if there is a reasonable ground for doing so, they are able to free you from the obligation of your promise to God.

There are two sorts of vows. These are called solemn vows and simple vows. Solemn vows are those taken by people who go into some religious Order approved by the Church for this purpose. Simple vows are those which any one may take on his own responsibility.

The difference of solemnity between them seems to be that solemn vows are not only made to God, but are distinctly *accepted* by the Church in His name by a formal act; whereas simple vows are not publicly accepted. It is naturally much more difficult to obtain a dispensation from solemn vows than from simple ones.

In treating of solemn vows, I am naturally led on to speak of what is called the "religious state"—that is, the life of monks and nuns. Those who enter this state are called "religious" or "regulars"—not religious in the ordinary meaning of the word, but because they have undertaken to serve God according to some special rule or regulation of life. The essence of this state is that men and women choose the service of God for their special calling, and dedicate themselves, their time, and their lives exclusively to Him. Those who enter this state of life, more than any others, say, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my chalice; Thou art He that wilt restore my inheritance unto me" (Ps. xv. 5). Monks and nuns, generally speaking, consecrate themselves to God by vows—sometimes by solemn, and sometimes by simple vows. By these vows they are bound for life to what the Catechism calls the Evangelical Counsels. These are: Voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, and entire obedience. To these is added the obligation to serve God according to the rules of some particular institute.

These vows are the most perfect and complete way in which a human being can consecrate himself to the service of his Creator. Those who make such vows give themselves up wholly to God, and renounce everything, including their own will and liberty, so that they may truly say with the apostles, "Behold we have left all things, and have followed Thee" (St. Matt. xix. 27). This kind of life has always been one of the distinguishing marks of the Christian Church, and is its glory to the present day.

We find, in the Holy Scriptures, abundant examples of special dedication to the service of God. The prophets of the Old Law—Elias and Eliseus and many others—were men who had retired from the world, and dedicated themselves wholly to the service of God—the very patterns of a religious life. St. John the Baptist, the precursor of Christ, was one who went out into the desert "preaching the baptism of penance unto the remission of sins," and "John was clothed in camel's hair

and a leathern girdle about his loins, and he ate locusts and wild honey" (St. Mark i. 6); and of holy Anna, who was in the temple to welcome our Lord at His presentation, we are told, "She was a widow until four score and four years: who departed not from the temple, serving night and day" (St. Luke ii. 37). The example set by these holy men and women was speedily followed in the Christian Church.

Even before the times of persecution were finished the deserts were peopled with men who were contented to be poor and unknown and forgotten by this world, that they might dedicate themselves to Christ. They went out into the deserts with the same feeling with which the apostle says, "But the things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ" (Phil. iii. 7).

Later on came the regular Orders—the Benedictines, the Augustinians, and others—who filled Europe with their good deeds. When modern civilization was young, and most countries were nearly covered with impassable forests, these holy men went out to serve God in the wilderness, and became the founders of future towns and villages. In those days of war and trouble it was their convents that were the refuge of peace and learning. As ages went on fresh Orders arose, each one dedicating itself specially to some work for the glory of God and the good of mankind, particularly to what was needed in their own day; and so it has been down to our time.

This was not the mere fancy of a day or an age, but is the characteristic of the Catholic Church. No matter how ruthlessly religious Orders may have been crushed by worldly power—no matter that their possessions have been seized, and their members dispersed—the moment that peace is restored they spring up again like flowers in the early summer sunshine. The religious houses in England were plundered, and the inmates put to death in numbers at the English "Reformation;" and yet now

we reckon our monasteries and convents by hundreds. Religious establishments were ruthlessly destroyed, a hundred years ago, at the French revolution, in France, and yet they have increased so much that an infidel government in our own time has hard work to destroy them.

Now, the principles from which all these aspirations after a "religious" life spring are these—that the highest of all the aims and employments that men can have upon earth is to serve God, and that it is the greatest possible privilege for any one to dedicate himself exclusively to His service; that this service is enough to fill the mind and heart of any man, and is the "treasure hidden in the field," for which a man may well "sell all that he has;" and that the search after "perfection" is the noblest object to which any human being can aspire. "Be ye perfect," our Lord says, "as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

Our Lord Himself points out this kind of life in the Gospel. We are told that a young man came to Him and asked, "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting? Our Lord said to him, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments; but the young man went on, and asked, What is yet wanting to me? Jesus saith to him, If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (St. Matt. xix. 16). Here you have the perfection of the "religious" life put before you. "Sell what thou hast"—give up everything—and "come and follow me."

Now, you may ask me, my dear brethren, what is the use of saying so much about a religious life? What our Lord said to this young man was clearly a special personal thing. He may, perhaps, give a particular vocation to individuals, but He clearly never meant it for mankind at large. That is quite true. You are certainly not all called upon "to leave all things and follow Christ," but still it is very useful, in a utilitarian age, to put before the minds of Christians that there *is* a higher vocation than the ordinary affairs of life, and that those who give their lives, and, like holy Anna, "depart not

from the temple by fastings and prayers, serving night and day" (St. Luke ii. 37), are at least as well occupied as those who are busied about external works.

People sometimes, in these days, talk of a useless and wasted life—as if any life could be better employed than one entirely given to God! In point of fact, those who adopt such a course of life are, generally speaking, more *directly* useful to their neighbours than others are; but if they did *nothing* but serve God by prayer, are their lives, therefore, wasted and useless? What can any creatures do more profitable than praise the God that made them? They are simply doing here upon earth the work which is the occupation and delight of the angels in heaven. "And they rested not, day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come" (Apoc. iv. 8).

To be useful to our fellow-creatures is, after all, a *secondary* end. *Why* should we do anything for them except for God's sake, and because it is His will? What claim has any creature on us for itself?

The world forgets and ignores the efficacy of prayer; but it is in reality none the less powerful for that, and those who are praying for their brethren are doing as great a work as those who are working for them. The monks, and nuns, and holy people who spend their lives in prayer, are like Aaron, the high priest, who put incense into his censer, and, "standing between the dead and the living, he prayed for the people, and the plague ceased" (Numb. xvi. 48).

I have dwelt on this subject because, although we are not all called to a "religious" life, all Catholics ought, at least, to have a great feeling of the grandeur, dignity, and holiness of the vocation given to some—given to those who are called to spend their lives, and be consumed—if I may say so—in the service of God, in doing that work of adoration and praise which *we* cannot adequately perform.

The use of these religious Orders to us—even when they do no external duties—is to recall us from worldliness, and to give us a high standard of perfection. They

show what heroic things nature, supported by God's grace, can accomplish.

We must not think of these thousands of monks and nuns as if they were separated from us. They are doing our work, and taking our places before the throne of God, and are, besides, closely bound to us by sympathy. Most religious Orders have some society of Christians living in the world connected with them. Some of them have a "third order," expressly intended to include a large number of men and women engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, and to make them partakers of all the prayers and good works done by the religious. In the same way, the Scapular of Mount Carmel, which is worn by an immense number of Catholics, is an institution by which people are *affiliated* to the Carmelite order, and united in prayer and devotion with that great community.

It is a good thing for many Catholics to share, in this way, in the practices of a religious life, as far as their ordinary duties will allow ; but, at least, we ought all to have a sympathy with those who have specially dedicated themselves to God's service.

In conclusion, if we want to understand the value of this life of devotion and contemplation, as compared with a life spent in active work, we have only to look to the example of Martha and Mary, and to listen to what our Lord says about them. "Now, it came to pass as they went that He entered into a certain town, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who, sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood and said : Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve ? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me. And the Lord, answering, said to her : Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part which shall not be taken away from her" (St. Luke x. 38).

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON XIII.

On Reverence to the Name of God.

“O Lord our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth” (Ps. viii. 2).

I now come to speak of another part of the Second Commandment. The name of God is profaned, or “taken in vain,” as I have said, by unlawful oaths, or by disregard shown to the obligation of lawful oaths and vows. There is, however, another and still more common way of profaning God’s Holy Name, and this is by bringing it in carelessly and disrespectfully in common conversation. The Catechism tells us that the Second Commandment forbids “blaspheming, cursing, and profane words.”

Let me first speak about the serious nature of sins of the tongue. Our Lord says: “A good man, out of a good treasure, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (St. Matt. xii. 35). And again: “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (St. Matt. v. 22).

These are words which ought to bring home to us the importance of being guarded in our speech. People in general, however, are not so. They easily make excuses for bad language. “They mean nothing by it.” “It is only a habit.” “Their passion is very soon over, and they think no more about it.” Such excuses you constantly hear from people who do not rightly understand

that God will call them to a strict account for their language.

The use of speech is one of the greatest things that God has given to men; it is the particular thing that distinguishes the human race; and therefore it is clear that we shall be held responsible for its use. Some sins, of their own nature, cannot be committed very often; but sins of the tongue, when they become usual to a man, are almost unceasing. A person who has fallen into the habit of bad language is almost *always* sinning. Who can reckon up the number of times in the day that an habitual swearer offends Almighty God? The very nature of the sin makes it frequent, and, as a rule, makes it injurious to others.

People say their anger is soon over, and the words they have said are soon forgotten. Yes; but the pain they have given and the scandal they have caused—are these soon over? It is very easy for them to forget what they have said, but their words have very likely wounded the hearts and disturbed the peace of others. The bitter words that have been spoken in a moment will, perhaps, rankle in the minds of some of the hearers, and be the cause of pain, and of sin, for years to come. It often happens that a few words spoken in haste, and without consideration, are the cause of quarrels that last for almost a life-time; and these words are, perhaps, never effaced from the memory of those who were injured by them. Again, a very few bad words, carelessly said, may easily be the cause of a lasting scandal and great injury to the soul of some one who hears them. Sins of bad language are very easily and frequently committed, and are generally the cause of injury or scandal to others. These two considerations, of frequency and of scandal, ought to be taken very seriously into account when we consider the importance of sins of the tongue.

St. James tells us of the evil effects of an unguarded tongue in very forcible language, which it will be well to quote. He says, "If a man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; he is able also with a bridle

to lead about the whole body. For if we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. . . . So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members which defileth the whole body. By it we bless God and the Father, and by it we curse men who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (St. James iii. 2). You see St. James here dwells upon three things. First, he mentions the effect which watchfulness over your tongue, or the want of it, produces on yourself; "he is able also with a bridle to lead about the whole body." Then he speaks of the mischief produced by hasty speech: "What a great wood it kindleth." And, lastly, the scandal which such language produces in the mouth of a Christian. It is scandalous that "out of the same mouth should proceed blessing and cursing."

The greatest of all sins of this sort—indeed, I may say of almost any sort—are words of blasphemy. Blasphemy means reproach or insult directed against God Himself. If anyone speaks against God, or against the attributes of God—against His goodness, or His mercy, or His justice—he is guilty of the sin of blasphemy. A blasphemer attacks God Himself. He is not contented with venting his passion upon men, but he turns against Almighty God and insults Him. Can any sin be more grievous?

In the Old Testament we are told how one of the Israelites had a quarrel with another man, and was guilty of blasphemy: "And when he had blasphemed the name, and had cursed it, he was brought to Moses . . . and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Bring forth the blasphemer without the camp; and let them that heard him, put their hands upon his head; and let all the people stone him. And thou shalt speak to the children of Israel: The man that curseth his God shall bear his sin: and he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him

die; all the multitude shall stone him, whether he be a native or a stranger" (Lev. xxiv. 11).

This history gives us some idea of the enormity of the sin of a man "cursing his God," and speaking evil of the Lord that made him. It is to no purpose for any one to say that he did not think what he was saying, or that it was because he was in a passion, or that it was only a habit. Such pretexts will not be taken as excuses for the shocking irreverence and want of feeling which alone could have induced any one to use such words.

But people often use the name of God, not blasphemously, but only carelessly. They bring in the name of God on all occasions, as an emphasis, to give weight to their speech, or as an exclamation. You sometimes hear good people constantly using the name of God, not irreverently, but *lightly*. This is certainly a great disrespect, and must always be regarded as a fault. These people are so much blinded by habit, or by the usages of those around them, that the irreverence of their words does not strike them. As I have said, you sometimes hear religious people using the Holy Name of God very carelessly, and with very little reverence. If they only knew how profane and disrespectful such a usage appears to others, they would take great care to avoid it. It would be a good thing if such people had before their eyes the words of the Commandment: "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain" (Ex. xx. 7).

I will now say a few words about irreverent talk. There are many people who would never think of blaspheming God, or of taking His name irreverently, who are still very fond of "irreverent talk." They will talk lightly about God, and lightly about religion. Sometimes this is in a grumbling way, as if they had a right to criticize, or find fault with God's Providence. People are apt to forget that we are not judges of God's ways. We have no right to judge, and we have no knowledge to enable us to judge, since, at best, we "see in a glass in a dark manner." It is an intolerable presumption for us to venture to find fault with any of God's deal-

ings, for "My thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts" (Isaias lv. 8). There is a great irreverence in grumbling and complaining. "Neither do you murmur, as some of them murmured and were destroyed by the destroyer" (1 Cor. x. 10).

Another sort of irreverent talk is when people amuse themselves by rather profane jokes about holy things. They talk about religion, about the usages of the Church, about the saints and ministers of God, in a very free and easy way, as if they were always trying to find out something ludicrous. It is difficult to fall into this tone of mind without being led on to some real disrespect. It is almost impossible to be often joking about people and things connected with God's service without sometimes saying things which not only reflect upon particular people, but are also more or less disrespectful to Almighty God. It is much safer, therefore, in all light and jocose conversation, to keep clear, as far as possible, of things even remotely connected with God's worship.

There is another form of evil talk unfortunately only too common, which is injurious both to God and to our neighbours. This is *cursing* or making use of "imprecations." People hardly realize the full meaning of the expressions they so commonly use. What their words really mean is to call down God's curse—God's condemnation—upon their neighbours, and this, perhaps, on some utterly trivial ground! It is difficult to conceive any greater affront to Almighty God than thus to call upon His most awful and terrible judgment on trifling, every-day occasions. "Thy judgments are a great abyss," says the Psalmist. What can be a more horrible profanity than to have these judgments constantly on your tongue?

If men only meant and realized what they actually say when they utter curses, it would be too horrible to think of; but they do not. Generally speaking, people

use such words out of habit, because they are accustomed to hear them. Making all allowance for this, however, my dear brethren, there still remains a terrible amount of malevolence and revengeful feeling, which is displayed, and, moreover, *encouraged*, by the terrible words which men use.

If ever you are tempted, then, to use language of this sort—to use curses and imprecations against your brethren—remember you are doing two wrongs. You are offering an injury to God, whose office and judgment you are usurping; and an injury to your neighbour, by presuming to call down most terrible things upon him, and giving way to and encouraging the hatred and revenge and other evil passions of your own heart. To conclude this part of the subject, listen to what the Holy Scripture says about profane language: “Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing, for in this there are many falls. And let not the naming of God be usual in thy mouth, and meddle not with the names of the saints, for thou shalt not escape free from them. For as a slave daily put to the question is never without a blue mark, so every one that sweareth and nameth shall not be wholly pure from sin” (Eccl. xxiii. 9).

Under this same heading we must include every kind of evil talk—even though it does not immediately bring in the holy name of God.

St. Paul says: “But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be so much as named among you, as becometh saints; or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose: but rather giving of thanks” (Eph. v. 3). The apostle here means to include all sorts of language injurious to your neighbours—all abusive words, calling names, insulting speeches, and all that may be called “low language.” How little people think of this! They forget that the tongue is a very powerful weapon, and that, though its wounds are not seen, they often go very deep. Many a man goes through life using his tongue recklessly. He thinks very little, and cares

very little, what he says or whom he hurts. Do you not think he will some day wake up to the knowledge of all the pain, and, perhaps, misery and sin, which he has caused? God is the avenger of these things: "He that calleth his brother fool shall be in danger of hell fire." These are terrible words for those whose mouths are habitually full of abuse.

St. Paul speaks of "foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose." By these words he means all conversation tainted by impurity or profanity, or that can in any way offend the ears, or hurt the conscience of our neighbour. This kind of foul and low conversation is, unfortunately, one of the crying evils of our own time and country. Wherever you go amongst some classes of society you hear it, and it is, therefore, very necessary to guard against it. Conversation of this kind is painful and offensive to all good people; much more will it be abominable in the sight of God, who has declared that He will hold us accountable for every "idle word."

How comes it, let us ask, that religious people, and good people, sometimes fall into the habit of using such language—language which, the apostle says, "Should not be so much as named amongst you"? They fall into this habit simply by keeping company in which this kind of conversation is common, without taking any pains to keep themselves free from it. When first they heard this sort of talk, very likely they were offended and pained by it; but they said nothing: perhaps they were afraid or ashamed to show that they didn't like it. They did not keep out of the company, or take any precautions, so, of course, they fell into the same habit themselves. Again, children and young people fall into the habit of bad words, because their parents take no trouble to correct them, and, perhaps, actually set them the example by using bad language in their presence.

People say sometimes that they speak in this way only through habit—that they really do not mean anything by the words they utter, that they cannot help it, and so forth. Let us see, then, how far *habit* is an excuse. If you have accidentally fallen into a habit of something

wrong, and then, when you notice how bad it is, you try to break yourself of it—the habit may be an excuse. It cannot be said to be your own fault, if you do a thing by habit, in spite of yourself.

But supposing that, when you notice what a habit you have got, you make *no* effort to break it off? That is quite a different case. Then it is your own fault that you remain in such a habit, and the wicked things that you say or do, through this habit, are, generally, quite your own fault. For example, supposing a man had picked up a habit of cursing and swearing, and using unbecoming language, and was really trying to overcome the habit—supposing he stopped himself every time that he caught himself at it, and recited a “Hail Mary” whenever he noticed that he had said a wicked word, by way of breaking himself of the practice—then you might fairly say that he was not responsible for most of the bad words he uttered, and, certainly, he would soon get rid of the habit altogether. If, however, he did nothing of the sort—if he simply said it was a great pity that he had contracted such a habit, and went on cursing and swearing without any attempt at improvement—the habit would be no excuse at all.

This consideration ought to give us all a great fear of bad habits. A habit has the effect of blinding your eyes to what you are doing, and leads you to do a great many things with very little consideration or remorse; but it is very seldom that your habit is any excuse for what you have done. It leads you to the edge of the precipice, but it does not break your fall.

It is not quite enough, however, to avoid irreverence of speech—you must also encourage a reverent and devout way of speaking. The Catechism says we are to “speak with reverence of God, and all holy persons and things.” Nothing shows a reverent turn of mind more than a proper, becoming, and feeling way of speaking about Almighty God, and things connected with His worship. You must, of course, avoid anything like affectation or mannerism in your way of speaking; but “out of the

fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and if your feeling towards God is what it ought to be, it will make itself evident in your way of speaking of Him. Moreover, the very custom of reverent speech, the self-restraint which makes your language always careful and becoming, has a powerful effect on your own feelings, and will enable you to restrain and put down any hasty or unbecoming thought that may arise within you.

If you wish to be reverent in thought and in speech, lift up your mind to heaven, and see the profound reverence which reigns there; see how the mightiest of all the angels veil their faces before God's awful throne! "O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth, for Thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens" (Ps. viii. 2). "To Thee the angels, to Thee the heavens and all the powers, to Thee the cherubim and seraphim cry out without ceasing, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Full are the heavens and the earth of the majesty of Thy glory. Thee the glorious choir of the apostles, Thee the laudable company of the prophets, Thee the white-robed army of martyrs doth praise." If the heavens and earth are full of the glory of this great God—if the mightiest of His servants approach Him with such profound reverence and awe, it is but a small thing that we men should be careful in our words and respectful in our manner when speaking of Him.

Whenever we mention the name of God, it ought to be to us like a little prayer. His name ought to raise up our minds for one moment above the earth, and make us think of His presence. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being"—ought we not to think of this whenever we have occasion to speak of Him? "But Thou, O Lord, art amongst us, and Thy Name is invoked over us: forsake us not" (Jer. xiv. 9). When we speak of this Name which is invoked over us, ought we not to remember Him whose protection alone can guard us from evil?

The Holy Scripture is full of exhortations to men to

honour the Holy Name of God. "Praise the Lord, ye children; praise ye the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from henceforth now and for ever. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the name of the Lord is worthy of praise" (Ps. cxii. 1). "Praise ye His Name, for the Lord is sweet: His mercy endureth for ever, and His truth to generation of generation" (Ps. xcix. 4). "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy Name give glory" (Ps. cxiii. 1). "The Lord is great in Sion, and high above all people. Let them give praise to Thy great Name, for it is terrible and holy" (Ps. xcvi. 3). "Holy and terrible is His Name: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cx. 9).

I cannot conclude without speaking of the special reverence due to the Holy Name of Jesus. All Catholics are taught from their infancy to give a particular honour to this name, and to bow their heads whenever it is mentioned in their hearing. The apostle says of our Lord Jesus, "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him and given Him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 8).

It is in the Incarnation that the Eternal God willed to be chiefly known, and specially honoured by men. God humbled Himself and became man, that He might be better known to His creatures. As they could not come to Him by reason of His infinite majesty, He "debased Himself, taking the form of a servant," in order to pass over the infinite distance which separates Him from His own creation. It is in this "form of a servant," and under that sweet and holy name which He assumed when He took to Himself our nature, that God wills especially to be honoured and loved.

The name of Jesus, therefore, has the greatest possible

claim on our reverence. It is the name which reminds us of the goodness of God, and of all that He has done for our salvation. The name of Jesus means Saviour, and it ought to be impossible for us to pronounce, or to hear the Holy Name, without some thought of our salvation, and of that Precious Blood which was shed for our salvation, for “we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold and silver . . . but with the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled” (1 St. Peter i. 19).

Since we have such reasons for special devotion and tenderness to the Holy Name, it ought to give us great pain to hear it pronounced with levity or irreverence. Any Catholic who can bear to hear it spoken profanely must, indeed, be far gone on the road to destruction. What hope can there be to one who is indifferent to that “one name given to men under heaven whereby they can be saved”—to that name which brings before them the sacred mystery of the Incarnation and the Passion?

I will here quote to you a passage from the great saint and doctor of the Church, St. Bernard. It is rather long, but it is very beautiful, and will make a suitable ending to my sermon. He says: “It is not idly that the Holy Ghost likeneth the name of the Bridegroom to oil when He maketh the Bride say to the Bridegroom: Thy name is as oil poured forth. Oil, indeed, giveth light, meat and unction. It feedeth fire, it nourisheth the flesh, it sootheth pain: it is light, food, and healing. Behold thus also is the name of the Bridegroom. To preach it, is to give light; to think it, is to feed the soul; to call on it, is to win grace and unction. Let us take it point by point. What, thinketh thou, hath made the light of faith so suddenly and so brightly to shine in the whole world, but the preaching of the name of Jesus? Is it not in the light of this name that God hath called us into His marvellous light, even that light wherewith we are being enlightened, and in His light seeing light, Paul saith truly of us: Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. This is the Name which the apostle was commanded to bear before Gen-

tiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, the Name which he bore as a light to enlighten His people, crying everywhere : The night is far spent, the day is at hand : let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light, let us walk honestly as in the day. He pointed out to all that candle set upon a candlestick, preaching in every place Jesus and Him crucified. How did that Name shine forth and dazzle every eye that beheld it when it came like lightning out of the mouth of Peter, to give bodily strength to the feet of the lame man, and to clear the sight of many a blind soul ? Cast he not fire when he said, In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk ? The Name of Jesus is not a name of light only, but it is meat also. Dost thou ever call it to mind, and remain unstrengthened ? Is there anything like it to enrich the soul of him that thinketh of it ? What is there like it to restore the fagged senses, to fortify strength, to give birth to good lives and pure affections ? The soul is fed on husks if that whereon it feedeth lack seasoning with this salt. If thou writest, thou hast no meaning for me if I read not of Jesus there. If thou preach or dispute, thou hast no meaning if I hear not of Jesus there. The mention of Jesus is honey in the mouth, music in the ear, and gladness in the heart. It is our healing, too. Is any sorrowful among us ? Let the thought of Jesus come into his heart, and spring into his mouth. Behold, when the day of that Name beginneth to break, every cloud will flee away, and there will be a great calm. Doth any fall into sin ? Doth any draw nigh to a hopeless death ? And if he but call on the life-giving Name of Jesus, will he not draw the breath of a new life again ?" (St. Bernard, Sermon 15 on Cant).

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XIV.

On the Observance of Sunday.

"See that you keep my Sabbath : because it is a sign between me and you in your generations ; that you may know that I am the Lord, who sanctify you." (Exodus xxxi. 13).

I NOW come to a most important subject connected with the worship of God—the observance of Sunday. When we consider how much depends upon this, we cannot, my dear brethren, be surprised that a special Commandment should have been given by God to enforce it.

The whole life of a man is influenced, in an extraordinary degree, by the way in which he observes Sunday. If he really sanctifies it, and, at any rate, *tries* to keep it holy, and means honestly to give it to God, it is very difficult for him to fall away altogether. However bad he may be in some things, at any rate he leaves himself an opportunity for thought and repentance ; and, moreover, God will give him great graces in return for loyalty in His service. On the other hand, if he lets Sundays go by, without making any effort to give a portion of his life to God—if he allows those days on which all creation joins together to worship its Creator, to pass without any acknowledgment from him, he is in great danger of becoming hardened in his iniquity. The duty of keeping Sunday holy is, then, one of the vital points in a Christian's life. The obligation ought, therefore, to be very carefully explained to all Christians, and to be constantly brought to their attention.

In the first place, it has to be observed that the Sunday is *not* the Sabbath day. You constantly hear it spoken of as such amongst Protestants, but this is clearly a mistake. The Sabbath day was the *seventh* day of the week, whereas the Christian Sunday is the *first* day. It is not as if

this were a mere accidental change, that had come about by some miscalculation. Then people might, perhaps, say that the exact day did not matter very much, so long as the spirit was observed. It was not an accidental change, but an intentional substitution made by the apostles. We constantly read, in the Acts of the Apostles, how they met together for religious purposes on the *first* day of the week. For instance, St. Luke says: "On the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, being to depart on the morrow: and he continued his speech until midnight" (Acts xx. 7). Here the first day of the week is mentioned as the regular day for their meeting.

This first day of the week was a distinct festival instituted by them in virtue of their apostolic authority, to commemorate our Lord's resurrection. The Jewish Sabbath was at that time observed most religiously, but the apostles did *not* think it right to make that their religious feast; but allowed it to fall into disuse as soon as it could be respectfully abolished. The Jewish Sabbath, then, is gone, and the Sunday is a new day, appointed by a fresh ordinance, to commemorate a New Law, and naturally to be observed in a new spirit.

The Third Commandment—"Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day"—is still binding in one sense. It is part of the natural law that some portion of our time should be set aside for God's service, and, so far, the Third Commandment must ever be binding. As to the *day* commanded, however, and the special regulations made for keeping it holy, it is just as much abolished as the Feast of the Passover, or any other Jewish solemnity.

The rules for observing Sunday must, therefore, be taken, not from the Jewish Law, but from the Commandments and usages of the Christian Church. Let us now see what our Lord said of the Sabbath and its observance, and thus we shall be able to form a good notion of what was to be the spirit of the Christian Sunday.

He begins by asserting His own supreme power over the Sabbath day—that power which, as I have said, was exercised afterwards by His apostles. “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath also” (St. Matt. xii. 8). He then goes on to lay down the principle that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (St. Mark ii. 27); and He carried out this principle by the stern rebuke He administered to the Pharisees. “And the ruler of the synagogue, being angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, answering, said to the multitude: Six days there are wherein you ought to work. On them, therefore, come and be healed: and not on the Sabbath day. And the Lord, answering him, said: Ye hypocrites, doth not every one of you on the Sabbath day loose his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead them to water? And ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo! these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” (St. Luke xiii. 14.)

These words, and many others like them, are a sufficient rebuke to the fanatical and superstitious observance of Sunday, which is sometimes urged upon us. You will frequently hear people quote to you the regulations of the Jewish Law, whereas, as I have said, it is plain that these regulations are no longer in force, and that we must look for our rules, not to the Jewish synagogue, but to the Christian Church. It is a mistake to urge people to over rigidity, as the Pharisees did. If you make it a day of gloom instead of one of refreshment, you are acting against the spirit of the New Law, and sometimes imposing a heavy yoke and a grievous temptation upon others.

There is, however, *another* fault which is still more dangerous—and that is the fault of over laxity. It is better to err by too much zeal, than by carelessness and self-indulgence. We Catholics have some little temptation to fall into this fault, perhaps by way of opposition to the exaggerated views put forward. Those who are really lax in the observance of Sunday, are guilty of a very serious and dangerous fault, and do a great

deal of harm to religion by the scandal they give to their neighbours.

The first thing to consider is, what does the Church ordain for the sanctification of the Sunday? It forbids "all unnecessary servile work." Servile work means hard work—work in which the body alone, or the body chiefly, is employed. Mental work—that is, work in which the mind and body share pretty equally—is not forbidden. Thus you may read or write, but you may not dig, or labour in a manufactory. It is sometimes difficult to tell exactly what comes under the head of servile work; in these cases you must go by common usage. For instance: needlework of all kinds is considered servile work, although in many cases it certainly cannot be called hard work.

It is unlawful to do any servile work without real necessity. By "necessity" we mean the ordinary works of life which cannot be put off—needful household work and such things. Necessity also means works of charity. If you were engaged in nursing the sick and doing good, your labour would then be excused. Our Lord says: "It is lawful to do a good deed on the Sabbath day" (St. Matt. xii 13).

There is another kind of necessity, and that is the most difficult to determine. It sometimes happens, especially in these modern times, that some kinds of labour must go on, and those who are engaged in them must either work at them on Sundays or lose their means of earning a livelihood. Take an example. In some manufactures the fires are never let out and the work can never altogether be stopped, but some one must be always working. In cases like this—that is, where a man can *honestly* say that he would lose his means of supporting himself, or suffer serious loss, if he refused to work on Sundays—he is allowed to do so. I use the word *honestly*, because there are a good many who make this a pretext—perhaps a pretext to themselves, that "they are obliged to work on Sundays." Yes, but if they cared about it, and were as anxious to get off work on that day, as they sometimes are when they want a

holiday, would they be *obliged*? Workmen can pretty often get a good deal of their own way when they like, and manage to take a good many holidays. If you find that somehow they are always obliged to work on Sundays, although they can get holidays at other times, I am afraid they will not be held excused by Almighty God.

People very easily exaggerate to themselves the amount of loss they will suffer if they abstain from their ordinary work on Sundays. They are quite convinced that they will lose their employment and be ruined. In fact, however, we very often see that the most successful in their business are just those who are most conscientious in sanctifying Sunday. Those who have some trust in God, and are not afraid to risk *something* for Him, are not often the losers even in this world.

The Church insists very much upon the importance of Sunday rest. This rest is almost necessary for body and soul, and without it there is no hope of properly sanctifying the Sunday.

The next thing the Church commands us is that we shall hear Mass. This is the great thing that we have to do to keep Sunday holy. It is a duty which is binding upon Christians under pain of grievous sin. It is a mortal sin to neglect Mass without a sufficient cause, because it is a matter of strict obedience. The Church commands us in the most solemn way to hear Mass, and commands us for the most solemn reason—that is, that by so doing we may pay our debt of external homage to Almighty God, and also may provide for our own sanctification. If we *cannot* go to Mass—that is, if there is something which really prevents us—then we are excused, but nothing short of a physical or moral impossibility is an exemption.

If you were a long way off the Church—for example, out at sea, or on a journey, or if you were ill in bed—you would be excused from assisting at Mass by *physical* inability. Again, if you were engaged in some occupation which could not be neglected, you would be excused, because it would be *morally* impossible for you to hear Mass. If, for instance, you were attending upon some one who

was ill, or were doing some work which you could not give up without losing your situation and means of livelihood, you would then be dispensed. You must, however, have some such distinct reason. People sometimes imagine that it is an excuse if they are disinclined to go. They have been put out and annoyed, or something has happened by which their minds have been distracted, and then you will hear them say: "I was in such dispositions that I couldn't attend to Mass, so I thought it better to stay away."

This sort of excuse shows a complete misunderstanding of the case. The question is not as to whether your state of mind is such as to render it easy to hear Mass well, but whether you have any sufficient ground of physical or moral impossibility to excuse you from obedience to a positive command. However "indisposed" a person may be mentally to attend to Mass, let him go and do his best, and at any rate he will have the merit of obedience.

Hearing Mass has been one of the great duties of Christians from the beginning. The early Christians, we are told, "were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread and of prayer;" and, again, "they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house" (Acts ii. 42—46).

Then, as time went on, persecutions arose, and they were not able to assemble publicly for fear of prison and of death. Still, they must "persevere in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the breaking of bread," so they hid themselves in dark passages underground—the catacombs as they were called—and there they celebrated the Holy Mass on the tombs of the martyrs.

In our own country the fiercest persecution could never stop the Holy Sacrifice. It was forbidden by law, and the priest who celebrated, and the people who assisted were liable to imprisonment and death. When a priest meant to say Mass he had to disguise himself, and hide like a thief, and scouts were posted around to give notice of the coming of any one likely to give information: and

then the Mass was celebrated in some very retired place, in fear and trembling. It often happened that they were discovered, and the priest, in his vestments, and the congregation found hearing Mass, were all carried off to prison.

In spite of all these difficulties and dangers, the Catholics contrived somehow or other to hear Mass. When we think of the early Christians hearing Mass underground in the catacombs, or our English and Irish forefathers assembling in secret places, at the risk of their lives, to hear Mass, we ought, I think, to be a little ashamed of many of the excuses we make. How very easy the duty is for us, and yet how many neglect it.

I have now explained exactly what is enjoined on us by the laws of the Church. We are commanded to abstain from servile work, and to hear Mass. I do not think, however, my dear brethren, that you ought to be satisfied by merely keeping to the letter of the command laid upon you.

If you are anxious for your own spiritual good you will carefully consider the *spirit* and intention of the Church's law. What, then, does the Church mean us to do? It is clearly meant that we should give to Almighty God a *good day's work*. All our time belongs to Him, and it is only reasonable that a fair proportion of it should be dedicated to His service—so we are to give one day in each week. A “good day's work” does not require that we should spend the day in prayer or religious duties. The great bulk of mankind are quite unable to spend any very long time in religious exercises, and it would be very painful for them to attempt it. On the other hand, “a day's” work doesn't mean half an hour. If you have heard Mass, for instance, in the morning, and then take the rest of the day for yourself, you are certainly *not* giving a fair day's work to God.

The spirit of the Church's law, then, is that you should habitually give a fair proportion of time—considering what you are *able* to do—to God's service—that is, either to attending the services of the Church, or to private spiri-

tual reading, or some other distinctly religious work. The plain object of the law is that Sunday may be a day on which we may lay in a stock of piety for the week. On working days people generally have little time for serving God, or taking thought for their salvation. They are hurried on by the bustle of daily life, and they have very little time to think. On Sundays, however, our Lord seems to say to us, as He once said to His apostles: "Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little" (St. Mark vi. 31). We are to rest a little in order to be face to face with Almighty God, and, in His presence, to refresh our souls and repair the injuries that the turmoil of worldly business has caused, so as to be ready to go to work again, full of the spirit of God.

The Sunday should be a day on which to renew our supply of good thoughts and devout feeling, of religious instruction and good intention. "Come ye to Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded" (Ps. xxxiii. 6). "O Lord, the hope of Israel: all that forsake Thee shall be confounded: they that shall depart from Thee shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living water" (Jer. xvii. 13). If you want light, grace and strength you must, at short intervals, bring yourselves into the presence of God, and so "be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. iv. 23).

Considering this, no way of spending the Sunday can be considered quite satisfactory which does not include some sort of private prayer, or meditation, or spiritual reading. It is all very well to assist at a great many Church services and hear a great many sermons, but if you do all these things without any real recollection of mind, there is something still wanting to you.

It is clear that any work or amusement which is inconsistent with these ends, is contrary to the spirit of the Church. If you spend your Sunday so as to do little or nothing for the good of your own soul, you are going against the object and intention of the Church's Commandment, even if you are not actually violating the

letter of it. This is, unfortunately, a very common fault amongst Christians, and one which produces the worst possible results. A great many people think that they may make Sunday a day of sloth and idleness. They, perhaps, hear an early Mass, and then they waste all the rest of the day. They are active and diligent enough when they are working for themselves, but they grudge even a little exertion for God's service. It seems hard to them to be asked to go to Benediction, or hear a sermon, or read a good book; they are quite satisfied with having given half an hour to God, and then do not scruple to spend the rest of the day in useless gossip, or reading story books, or in mere sleep and idleness.

Again, others make Sunday a day of dissipation. We will suppose that they have actually complied with what the Church requires; they have heard Mass, but what else do they do on the Sunday? They look out for the most exciting and dissipating amusement they can find. They, perhaps, give dinner parties, and entertain their friends, and succeed in making the Sunday the most noisy, bustling day in the week.

Many good people almost habitually spend their Sundays too much in this fashion; and yet we cannot doubt that such a line of conduct is quite opposed to the spirit of the Catholic Church. You cannot "serve God and Mammon," and we may apply this principle to details. If you make Sunday a day of boisterous pleasure and mental dissipation, you cannot make it a day of service to God. It is no use to say that you have complied with what is actually commanded, and are breaking no distinct law. If you are making Sunday a day of dissipation, and violent amusement and excitement, you are not keeping it holy and dedicating it to the service of God, according to the spirit of the Church.

People who act in this way are, besides, apt to forget that they are spoiling the Sunday, not for themselves only, but for a great many others. The dissipation you begin spreads around, and dozens of people are, perhaps, prevented from serving God as they ought to do. In a great house, for instance, when

people entertain, and give dinner parties, and make Sunday a day of festivity, many of their dependents are prevented from serving God, and doing any thing for their own souls by the dissipation of their employers. These employers are often very good people, and assist diligently at Mass themselves; but I am afraid they will be held responsible for the spiritual injury which they occasion to others.

The Catechism tells us that "we are commanded to rest from servile works, that we may have time and opportunity for prayer, for going to the Sacraments, hearing instructions and reading good books."

People do not think enough of the duty of instruction and pious reading on Sunday, and yet these are very important. I think some short time given to pious and instructive reading is almost *essential* to a well spent Sunday. The Church sets the example by having the Gospel and the Epistle read out to the people, to refresh their minds with the Word of God. It would be well if every one would dedicate some short time to reading a portion of the New Testament, or a meditation or sermon, or of the lives of the saints, or some other devout book.

It is important, moreover, that children should grow up with right ideas on this subject. It is foolish to make Sunday a day of painful restraint and dreariness to them; but it is also a great mistake to let them think that they have nothing to do but to hear Mass, and that they may read story-books all the rest of the day.

I must now say a word on the general question of the lawfulness of Sunday recreations. Sunday has two objects. It is to be a day for God's service, and after that a day of *rest*—a day on which body and mind are to enjoy the rest which man needs. But *rest* doesn't mean sitting still. If a man has to sit still for six days, it is not rest to sit still the seventh also. Real rest of body and mind implies the exercise and amusement which are wanted. It is perfectly lawful, therefore, to enjoy all reasonable recreation—that is, any recreation which does not prevent you from observing the spirit of the Commandment. If you spend your Sunday in

reading novels, or in eating and drinking, and dissipation, it is plain that you are doing wrong ; on the other hand, when you have given a fair proportion of your time to God and to your own soul, you may reasonably enjoy yourself.

You must take care, however, that you do not unreasonably interfere with others, either by preventing them from keeping Sunday holy, or by giving scandal. I think it a matter of great importance to avoid shocking the religious feelings of others in this matter. It may sometimes be that their ideas are rather overstrained, and that they have foolish prejudices ; it is, however, a fault on the right side to give a little too much to Almighty God, and a fault which we ought to respect. It is a great deal easier to teach people to be too lax than to be too strict, and it would be well if good people were always on their guard against giving their sanction to laxity, either by precept or example.

You find some people, however, who act on quite the opposite principle. They seem to think it rather a fine thing to shock the religious feelings of others, and go directly against all their prejudices, by doing all sorts of unusual things on Sunday. This certainly is not right. Even if you are sure that you are not erring yourself by over laxity—which is sometimes a little doubtful—why should you scandalize others who are really zealous for God's service ? St. Paul says : “ When you sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I scandalize my brother ” (1 Cor. viii. 13).

Those who are careless and over-free in their amusements on Sunday are very apt to give scandal here in England. If their behaviour causes sin in other people, or turns people away from the Church of God, they will certainly be held responsible for it.

I must conclude by dwelling on the great advantage of keeping Sunday well, and the blessings that are sure to come from doing so. A careful observance of Sunday is the great external mark of your reverence for Al-

mighty God ; it is the formal worship of body and soul which you offer to Him before angels and men. This worship may be called, in a sense, the back bone of religion ; if you do not give it, and give it regularly, your religion is not worth much.

It is also the special mark of obedience to the Church. Obedience, especially if given with some little temporal sacrifice, is sure to bring blessings with it. It is very sad to see how dreadfully afraid people are of risking even the smallest loss for the service of God ; whereas we have plenty of examples, as I before said, to show that those who are not quite so timid do not lose much in the long run. If we were to look round London, for instance, I think we should find that those traders and business people who conscientiously abstain from work on Sundays are by no means the least successful. In the Old Law Almighty God made up to the Jews any temporal loss they might have suffered from the observance of the days kept holy, by the blessings which He sent upon them and all that belonged to them ; so He would do with us, if only we trusted Him a little more, and were not quite so careful of ourselves.

Give, then, my dear brethren, this one day to Almighty God cheerfully and lovingly ; do not grudge the little trouble and self-denial which it may cost you, and God will reward you a hundredfold for all that you do for His sake. Teach your children to reverence the day set apart for God's service, and so you are securing to them the best means of persevering in virtue, and providing for them an efficacious remedy and means of returning to God if ever they should be led away by the violence of temptation. Amen.

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BY THE REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XV.

The Holy Mass.

"And behold, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing as it were slain" (Apoc. v. 6).

I HAVE been speaking, my dear brethren, about the duty of sanctifying Sunday. It remains for me to say something more in explanation of the Holy Mass, as this is the authorized way of keeping Sunday holy, and the special duty imposed on us by the Church for this purpose. It is the one special duty which the Church imposes upon us. There are, indeed, many other devotions and exercises of piety, which are left to our own discretion; but the Church *commands* us, as the strictest of duties, to assist at Mass, as the one thing of strict obligation. It is vain for those who have the opportunity of hearing Mass, and will not take the trouble to do so, to think that they can make up for their neglect in some other way. There are many who *cannot* always attend at Mass; they live, it may be, a long way off, or their health confines them to the house. In these cases you are not actually present, but you may join in spirit with the Masses which are said throughout the world, and so sanctify the Sunday very well. It is quite different with those who are away from Mass by their own carelessness, without any good reason.

You sometimes hear people talk of going to church in the afternoon, of going to Benediction or evening service, as if it came to nearly the same thing as going to Mass, so that they may substitute one for the other without any great harm. This idea, of course, comes simply from ignorance. No Vespers, or evening devotions, or Benediction will, in any degree, take the place

of Mass to those who *might* hear Mass if they chose to do so.

The command to hear Mass is laid upon us in the strictest way. The Church commands us to hear Mass in God's name, and by virtue of that obedience which we owe to Him. The command is given to us as a matter of very great importance, and binds us under pain of mortal sin. Our Lord says to His apostles: "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me" (St. Luke x. 16).

Let us consider the importance of the Holy Mass, and then we shall see why the Church makes so great a point of our attending to it, and is so very stern with all who neglect that duty. Our very nature tells us that we are bound to worship our Creator, and that this is the first of all our duties. Nature, however, tells us something more than this. It tells us that worship, to be complete, must be something more than mere words. Prayer and praise, the thoughts of the heart, and the words of the lips are not enough; there must be something higher. We must *offer* something to God, something of value sufficient, to be suitable to His dignity, something which shall adequately express our *homage*, submission, and dependence upon Him. In other words, nature points out that the highest kind of worship is that of *sacrifice*. A sacrifice means something offered to God, and dedicated to Him, and which is in some way *expended* in His service or poured out before Him in token of His being the Supreme Lord of all.

Mankind, from the beginning, have felt the need of this kind of worship, and have been striving perpetually to find adequate objects of sacrifice. The history of religion shows us how keenly men have ever felt that God must be worshipped by sacrifice, and that without it all homage is imperfect. This doctrine of sacrifice is either the direct teaching of our nature, or else the remains of the primitive tradition given to the human race, for we meet it everywhere. The ancient religions with which the world was covered had each its own forms of sacri-

fice, and the pagan worships of the present day have their forms. It does not matter whether you consult the cultivated and refined religions of Greece and Rome, or go to the most uncivilized barbarians of the present day. Everywhere you find the same idea—sacrifice to God. The Almighty requires a worship beyond mere words—He must be worshipped by sacrifice.

If we go back to the very beginning of the human race, we find that men had hardly been driven out of Paradise when sacrifice began. “And Abel was a shepherd, and Cain a husbandman. And it came to pass, after many days, that Cain offered, of the fruits of the earth, gifts to the Lord. Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat: and the Lord had respect to Abel and his offerings. But to Cain and his offerings He had no respect: and Cain was exceeding angry, and his countenance fell” (Gen. iv. 2). This is the account of the first solemn worship offered to God—the worship of sacrifice. Again, when Noah went out of the ark, after the Deluge, his thanksgiving was of the same character. “And Noah built an altar unto the Lord, and, taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour and said: I will no more curse the earth for the sake of man, for the imagination and thought of man’s heart are prone to evil from his youth: therefore I will no more destroy every living soul as I have done. All the days of the earth, seed time and harvest, heat and cold, summer and winter, night and day, shall not cease” (Gen. viii. 20).

The idea of worshipping God by sacrifice was not a mere fancy of men. It was a conviction deeply rooted in their very nature, and formally confirmed by God. When God chose out one people for Himself, and gave them a distinct law and worship, He carried out, to the full, the primeval idea of the worship of sacrifice. He commanded that His people should offer to Him holocausts or whole-burnt offerings; sacrifice for sin and for ignorance; peace offerings and offerings of thanksgiving, and a vast number of other sacrifices.

But what, after all, could these sacrifices do? They were evidences of the desire of the human race to find something worthy to offer to Almighty God. They were the best that men had to offer, but in themselves they were utterly disproportioned to the majesty of Him whom they intended to honour. Almighty God, therefore, condescended to His creatures, and He Himself provided a sacrifice which alone could be worthy of Himself. "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me; holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then, said I, behold I come; in the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 6).

The sacrifices appointed by God in the Old Law were but types and figures of that one great Sacrifice which He had been pleased to ordain for the human race—the Sacrifice of His own Divine Son made Man.

All the sacrifices of goats and of calves were types and figures of that one great Sacrifice in which Jesus our Lord, "by His own blood, entered once into the Holies;" but they were not *mere* figures. The holocausts, the peace offerings, and daily sacrifice of the Old Law were meant for something more than merely figurative actions. They were *representations*, indeed, of Christ's Sacrifice, but represented it in the sense of making it *present* to the people who assisted at them. By these sacrifices our Lord's Passion, which was then far off in the ages to come, was made present to them, so that they might use it as a real worship to God, and share in all its life-giving efficacy. It is for this reason that our Lord is called "the Lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world" (Apoc. xiii. 8). He was slain from the beginning in a very true sense, because His Passion was made perpetually present to the people of all ages in the sacrifices they offered, because His Precious Blood was continually being offered up in anticipation, and the merits purchased by His death shared amongst the people as the fruits of the sacrifices offered to God.

But now, my dear brethren, to come to the part of

the subject which principally concerns us, we have to consider how this solemn worship of sacrifice is to be continued in our time. It is quite certain that God will never leave us without something to correspond to the sacrifices which made our Lord's Passion present to the people of old. The answer is very simple. The Sacrifice of the Mass is the one great Sacrifice which takes the place of all that multitude of sacrifices ordained in the Old Law. It takes the place of these sacrifices, but carries out the end for which they were instituted in a far more perfect and complete manner. They were representations by which our Lord's Sacrifice was made present not in reality, but in *effect*; but *our* Sacrifice is one which makes our Lord's Passion present in reality, as well as in effect. "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26).

Our Lord suffered once, and once entered into the Holies; yet still He was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, because His death was to be in some way present from the beginning to the end. It was made present in figure and effect to all preceding generations by the sacrifices appointed for them by Almighty God, and is present to us by its mystical renewal in the Sacrifice of the Mass. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation, for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 11).

The Holy Mass is this Sacrifice, this clean oblation which is offered up in every place. From the rising of the sun to its going down the Holy Sacrifice is perpetually offered. In every age since the time of the apostles, in every nation under heaven, has this same Sacrifice been offered to Almighty God.

The Mass, then, supplies the place of all the different kinds of sacrifice which were offered by the Jews, and it obtains for us, in a more perfect manner, all the ends and objects for which a sacrifice is offered. The Cate-

chism says: "The Sacrifice of the Mass is offered for four ends—first, to give supreme honour and glory to God; secondly, to thank Him for all His benefits; thirdly, to obtain pardon for all our sins; and, fourthly, to obtain all other graces and blessings through Jesus Christ."

We have to consider the Mass, however, not only as a Sacrifice. It is also the special act by which you take part in the Passion of our Lord—that is, you show your sympathy with Jesus suffering. In it you claim your place at the foot of His cross, and your share in His Passion; you thank Him for all that He has done for you. To use the words already quoted: you "show forth the death of the Lord until He come" every time that you devoutly assist at the Most Holy Mass.

The Mass is also the grand act of communion in which all parts of the Church are united together. St. John describes to us "the Lamb standing as it were slain," and the hosts of heaven gathered together to worship. "Standing as it were slain," because though He was sacrificed once, and all the pain and ignominy had passed away, yet that Sacrifice was continually renewed, and perpetuated for ever in the glory of heaven. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the ancients: and the number of them was thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction. And every creature, which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them: I heard all saying: To Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honour, and glory, and power for ever and ever" (Apoc. v. 11).

In this great hymn of praise the Church on earth joins by the celebration of Holy Mass. The Lamb is then in the midst of us, "standing as it were slain." His Passion and death are again celebrated, and He once more offers Himself as our Victim in a mystical manner; and the

Church militant on earth unites itself with the glorified Church in heaven.

I must now go on, my dear brethren, to consider more practically the duty of hearing Mass. We speak of attending Mass, assisting at Mass, hearing Mass, but what is it that we exactly mean by these terms? We do not mean mere looking on. Sometimes you meet people who hardly realize that they have anything much else to do when they go to Mass beyond looking on whilst the priest celebrates. They do not seem to understand the share that they have in that celebration. It is not a mere form of prayer in which they are to join. It is, indeed, a beautiful thing for Christians to join in prayer, but the Mass is a something much higher. You go to Mass to take part yourself in a great action, the greatest that can be performed on earth. You go to unite with the priest in offering a Sacrifice to God, and not only to unite with the priest whom you see, but with our Lord Jesus Christ, "the great High Priest of the good things to come."

It is our Lord who is the great and the true Priest, who offers Himself upon the altar. As it was He who sacrificed Himself by His own will on Mount Calvary, "who, by the Holy Ghost, offered Himself unspotted unto God," so He it is who, by the hands of His earthly priests, continues to offer Himself in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and it is with Him you are invited to join. The priest, as he celebrates Mass, treats all those present at the Mass as sharing in his act, and offering up Sacrifice in union with him. "Brethren, pray that my Sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty"—these are the words which the priest addresses to the people just before the most solemn part of the Mass begins. Again, during the Canon of the Mass he says: "Remember, O Lord, thy servants and all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee, for whom we offer, or *who offer* to Thee this Sacrifice of praise for themselves and all that belong them, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their salvation and safety, and

render their vows to Thee, the eternal, living and true God."

There are two things which we want in order to assist worthily at the Mass. The first is *intention*. When you go to Mass you must intend to hear Mass, otherwise your being present is no human action at all. You will hear Mass well in proportion to the earnestness of your intention. If you think very little of what you are going to do, and allow yourself to be led a good deal by routine, you may have, it is true, an intention, strictly speaking, but it is a very feeble intention.

An earnest intention requires earnest thought. If you have been thinking of the Mass—of the meaning of it and its objects—then you are sure to have a strong intention in hearing it. Then you will really intend, and intend with all your heart, not only to "hear Mass," but, more distinctly, to offer to God a Sacrifice of praise and homage, to approach His throne and offer gifts before His altar. The Psalmist says: "Come in before His presence with exceeding great joy. Know ye that the Lord He is God: He made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Go ye into His gates with praise, into His courts with hymns, and give glory to Him" (Ps. xcix. 2). This is the sort of intention which Christians should have in their minds when they hear Mass.

You must have *some* kind of intention or you would not hear Mass so as to comply with the obligations. For example, a person merely present in the church for some other purpose would not necessarily hear Mass, though he might be present whilst it was celebrated. This intention need not, however, be actually present to your mind. It is not *necessary* to think beforehand what you are going for, and what is your object in going. The necessary intention is sufficiently or *virtually* contained in the mere fact of going to church, and, therefore, you never need have any scruple as to whether you had an intention sufficient to fulfil the obligation.

As a help to hearing Mass devoutly, however, nothing is more useful than the habit of forming to yourself a

distinct intention before you begin. "I am going to hear Mass, to join in offering the great Sacrifice to Almighty God, to associate myself with the Passion of Christ, and to obtain all the graces I want for myself and others, and especially such and such particular ones."

I have now to consider the other condition requisite for hearing Mass. It is not enough to *intend* to hear it, but you must apply your mind to doing so; that is, you must have the necessary *attention*. If you did not endeavour, in any way, to attend to what you were doing, so that your mind and heart were entirely absent, you would be very far, indeed, from honouring or worshipping God. You would deserve the reproach that Almighty God made to the Jews: "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (St. Matt. xv. 8).

When people complain of distractions, it very commonly means that they have made no effort at all to hear Mass well. It would be very odd if they were not distracted, considering that they do nothing to fix their minds on God, and allow every possible distracting object to come in their way. When "distractions" are only another name for carelessness, they are, of course, sinful: they are a great disrespect to God, and prevent you from receiving the graces His goodness has designed for you.

Let us first consider a few of the causes of distraction. You find a great many people who contrive to be always just a little late for Mass. They are seen hurrying in after Mass has begun—at the *Gloria*, or, perhaps, at the Gospel. Before they have well settled themselves in their places, and got themselves ready to attend, the Mass is half over. It would be very strange if you could pay much attention under these circumstances. By coming so late, and being in such a hurry, you have rendered it almost impossible to hear Mass devoutly. If you really want to attend, you ought to be in your place a few minutes before Mass commences, and then you would have time to collect your thoughts. "Before

prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God" (Eccl. xviii. 23). If some sort of preparation is required for every kind of prayer, how much more necessary is it for so solemn an act as the Holy Mass? You can hardly expect, then, to hear Mass profitably if you do not give some little time for preparation—that is, time to withdraw your thoughts from worldly affairs, and time to put yourself in the presence of God.

If you would avoid distraction, you must also pay attention to your outward demeanour. You should take your place and position in church in such a way as to have as few external things as possible to distract your attention. Some people, when they come to church, instead of looking out for the place in which they can say their prayers best, stand about the door, or take up some position where their thoughts are likely to be called away every moment. Others, again, seem to fancy that the great object is to make themselves as comfortable as they can; they take the easiest possible posture, and give way to natural indolence and love of repose. You cannot be surprised, in these cases, if they afterwards complain that their minds are filled with distractions, and that they have found it very hard to think of God.

External position is not important of itself. You may pray just as well sitting down or standing as you could do on your knees; still it cannot be denied that, as a rule, the bodily attitude has a considerable effect upon the *mental* attitude, and the tone of mind in which you approach Almighty God. If you attend Mass in a lounging, irreverent way, sitting down through the greater part of the time without any necessity, it is pretty certain that your prayers have not been what they ought to be. It would be very hard for any one to approach Almighty God as a Christian ought, and yet maintain a careless and lounging behaviour. How is it possible to combine such an exterior with the spirit of awe, reverence, and love which ought to animate one who is adoring his Creator?

In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican our

Lord describes "two men who went up into the temple to pray." He gives us a vivid idea of the demeanour of the two: the Pharisee, full of himself, and of his own dignity and goodness, and the Publican, who, "standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven: but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Our Lord concludes by saying: "I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other" (St. Luke xviii. 13).

If, my dear brethren, we could only imagine to ourselves that our Lord was watching us as He watched the Pharisee and the Publican, when we go into His house to worship Him—if we thought that He was going to observe our behaviour both externally and internally, as we assist at the Holy Mass, in order to pronounce that we go home justified or not, I think that most of us would find something in our behaviour that we should be glad to alter.

It is an important thing to begin well. The first act of your entering the Church will give the tone to all the rest you do. If you come into the church in a very reverent spirit, and make your genuflection to the Blessed Sacrament as you ought, and begin by a few minutes' very fervent adoration, bowing yourself down before your Creator, you will find it very easy to keep up the same spirit during the rest of the Mass.

I have said that there are a great many different ways of hearing Mass. So long as you are joining in the Holy Sacrifice, and attending to the great action carried on before you, it does not matter what form of words you use. It is very important, however, to fix upon *some* way of hearing Mass. If you have not taken pains to consider how you are to hear Mass, and have not provided the prayers necessary, you are almost certain to be distracted. Very few people are able to keep their minds recollected in prayer for any time without *something* to fix their attention and recall them if they are wandering.

You may, if you like, follow the very words which the priest is saying at the altar. You can find no words

more beautiful or touching than those of the Church's Liturgy. The greater part of this, the Ordinary of the Mass, is to be found in most prayer-books, and a little attention to what the priest is doing will enable you to follow accurately.

You are not, however, obliged to recite all the prayers the priest says. You may read the "Devotions for Mass," which are found in all prayer-books. These prayers are simpler in their language than the prayers of the Missal, and better suited to some people. You may also hear Mass very well by making a meditation in the course of it. The Mass is the continuation of our Lord's Sacrifice, and, at the same time, a memorial of His Passion, and not only of the Passion, but of all the other events of His life. You may, therefore, very well take any scene of the Life and Passion of our Lord, and place it before your imagination during Mass, and try to draw from it all the devout feelings and aspirations it would naturally lead to. Many people, for example, recite the Rosary during Mass, and make meditations on the different scenes in the life of our Lord which are presented by that devotion.

And now, my dear brethren, to conclude what I have been saying on this important subject: You have to hear Mass; it is one of the highest duties and greatest privileges which God has given to us as Catholics. To hear it well, you must be regular, and never allow anything but an absolute necessity to keep you away; you must be punctual, and not slight the Holy Sacrifice, and deprive yourself by coming so late as to be unable to attend properly; you must have the intention of joining in all the great ends of Sacrifice, and you must do your best to give your mind and heart to our Lord for that short time, with as little distraction as possible.

If you do this diligently, then will our Lord give you to drink of the living waters of His grace. "The water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain springing up into life everlasting" (St. John iv. 14).

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON XVI.

The Ritual of the Mass.

“And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer : and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar” (Apoc. viii. 3).

THE Holy Mass is the great Sacrifice of the Catholic Church. It is, my dear brethren, the greatest and most solemn action that can be done on earth, and the most comprehensive in its effects; but it is also the most simple. In that one Sacrifice, in which our Lord offers Himself upon the altar, the different ends of all the ancient sacrifices are accomplished. What was done by the varied sacrificial rites of the Old Law is carried out, in an infinitely more perfect way, by the few essential words by which our Lord has ordained that the Sacrifice of the Mass should be accomplished.

There is, however, another way in which we may look at the Holy Mass. It is the central act of all the public worship offered to God in His Church. There are seasons of thanksgiving when the Church has to raise her voice in gratitude to God for His favours; and there are seasons of mourning, when nothing is heard but sorrowful supplication, when, “between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord’s ministers, shall weep, and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people” (Joel ii. 17). In all these different expressions of feeling the Holy Mass takes the principal place, and in it, all the different and varied acts of worship which men can offer to God are contained.

Around the essentials of the Holy Mass, therefore, has grown up a rich and varied ritual, as a means of expressing all the different feelings with which men approach to the Holy Sacrifice. The external part which has been

added to the essential Sacrifice is not, indeed, necessary of itself, but, at the same time, it is the natural and reasonable expression of the ideas and feelings which men have in the service of God. I propose to-day, therefore, to speak of the Ritual or Liturgy of the Mass.

Catholics understand very well all the external ceremonial of the Church; that is, they feel at once that the external ceremonies are reasonable and becoming, although, perhaps, they do not take as much trouble as they might to understand the exact meaning of them. It is quite different, however, with Protestants. They have a prejudice on the subject, and their first idea on seeing Catholic ceremonial is one of repugnance and dislike. We hear, or used to hear, for instance, a great deal about "mummeries" and "superstitious usages;" all of which is really the result of prejudice and want of thought. It is very necessary, therefore, for Catholics to understand pretty well the meaning and origin, as well as the use, of their own ceremonial, both for their own benefit, and that they may have a good explanation to give to any one who asks. A few words of kind and courteous explanation to strangers may often be the means of doing much good.

To begin with, let us consider the origin of the Mass—that is, how it got into its present shape as a Liturgy. We hear about the Holy Mass in the Acts of the Apostles: "And they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers:" and again: "Continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house" (Acts ii. 42). St. Proclus, a writer of the fifth century, gives us this account of the way in which the Liturgy of the Mass grew up.

He says: "After our Saviour was taken up into heaven, the apostles, before being scattered over the whole world, being gathered together in oneness of mind, passed whole days in prayer; and, having found the Mystic Sacrifice of the Lord's Body a great consolation, they sang it at very great length; for this, and teaching, they considered preferable to anything else. With very

great gladness and much joy were they instant in this Divine Sacrifice, ever bearing in mind the Lord's word, which says : ' This is my body,' and ' do this in memory of me,' and ' He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him.' For this cause, too, with a contrite heart, they sang prayers, earnestly imploring the divine aid : yea, they also accustomed those who had been recently baptized from amongst the Jews and Gentiles to the things of the dispensation of grace, and, teaching them to leave aside those which were before that dispensation of grace, as being but shadows of that grace, they instructed them religiously. Through those prayers, therefore, they expected the advent of the Holy Ghost, that, by His own divine presence, He might make and render the bread that lay there for sacrifice, and the wine mixed with water, that very same body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ ; which is no less done even to this day, and will be done to the consummation of the world." St. Proclus goes on to say that St. John Chrysostom, to meet the degeneracy of the times, shortened the Liturgy, and says: " For this cause he also omitted much, and arranged it to be celebrated in a conciser form, for fear lest, by degrees, men who are specially fond of a kind of liberty and ease, deluded by the deceitful reasonings of the enemy, might keep aloof from so great an apostolical and divine tradition " (see " Faith of Catholics," vol. ii., p. 505).

This passage gives us a beautiful idea of how the Ritual of the Mass was first arranged. We can fancy ourselves the apostles meeting together for the " breaking of bread." They still had, sounding in their ears, the very words of our Lord at His last supper : " Do this in commemoration of me "—they could still see the tender, loving countenance with which He sat down with them at that table ; and, moreover, they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and could recall and understand all the instruction He had given them. Our Lord had promised them this. He had said to them : " But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to

your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (St. John xiv. 26).

In those parts of the world where the Christian faith was first established, this common ritual assumed by degrees a character suited to the requirements of the people. Antioch was the first place where the Christians became numerous. There it was that the faithful were first called Christians. The ritual there adopted, and in use in the Eastern Church, was called after the apostle St. James, who was the first Bishop of Jerusalem. Soon after the Church spread greatly in Egypt, and the Liturgy used there was called after St. Mark, the disciple of St. Peter. Finally, Rome, the centre of the pagan world, was converted, and the Western Church adopted the Liturgy called by the name of St. Peter.

These three Liturgies were all substantially the same—that is, they all contained the same general idea, and the same essential parts, but they varied in the arrangement. The ceremonies and prayers used to express the meaning of the Sacrifice, and the language used were all different.

From these three come all the Liturgies in use at the present day. The Mass is celebrated in all these different forms, and yet is everywhere really the very same thing. During the Octave of the Epiphany—which is the feast of the Gentiles coming to our Lord—the Mass used to be celebrated in Rome in all the different rites and languages adopted in different parts of the Church.

In England and the Western Church, we only see the Roman Mass. There is one variation of this which is common enough—that is, the Dominican rite. If you go into a Dominican church, you will find that the Mass there differs a good deal from the Roman rite.

I must now come to the question: What is the good of all this ceremonial? Why can you not say your prayers just as well without it? Would it not be better to have everything much more simple?

The answer is very obvious. You must have a ritual of some sort, because you can't do without it. It is impossible for men to meet together for the public worship

of God, without *some* established ceremonial or other. The very nature of man requires it. You might change the ceremonial, and have a simpler one—but a ceremonial of some kind you *must* have. Take any of those who object to *our* ceremonies, go into their churches, and you will find *some* authorized, established form of conducting Divine worship, and you would probably find that they are just as much attached to their own particular usages, as we are to the ceremonial appointed by the Church.

It is not, therefore, a question between *ritual* and *no ritual*, but between their customs and ours, because I think it may safely be said that there never was in this world a body of men united in the worship of God without *some* kind of ritual.

But they would say their forms are so much *simpler*, and they assume that there is some special beauty in this *simplicity*. Simplicity, however, sometimes means nothing else than poverty—that everything is as poor, and meaningless, and commonplace as can be devised. What is the particular beauty of this? Why should God's service be made poor and commonplace? Why, on the contrary, since by the very law of our nature we must have an outward ritual of some kind, should we not dedicate to Almighty God everything choice and beautiful?

If we want to know the *sort* of externals which surround the worship of God, where can we find a better example than in the ceremonial which He Himself established upon earth? That ritual, indeed, has come to an end. It was for a time, and its object has been fulfilled. Still, the principle on which that worship was established remains true.

We know very well that Almighty God, in the Old Law, established the most elaborate and magnificent ceremonial that was ever seen in the world. The temple built for Him upon earth was the richest and most gorgeous that the hands of man could fashion. Nothing was left to chance, but everything was most diligently made after the pattern given by God Himself. "And all the house was covered within with cedar, having the turn-

ing and joints thereof artfully wrought, and carvings projecting out: all was covered with boards of cedar, and no stone could be seen in the wall . . . and all the walls of the temple round about He carved with divers figures and carvings: and he made in them cherubim and palm trees, and divers representations standing out and coming forth from the wall. And the floor of the house He also overlaid with gold within and without" (3 Kings vi. 18—30).

And in this temple Almighty God ordained a most complete and elaborate system of external worship. The Sacrifices to be offered up on all occasions; the exact manner of offering; the vestments to be worn by the priests during their ministrations, were all regulated, and the observance of these regulations was a matter of the strictest command.

Nothing can show the importance which God attached to the ceremonial He had appointed, in a more striking manner, than the story of Nadab and Abiu, which I before quoted. "Nadab and Abiu, the sons of Aaron, taking their censers, put fire therein, and incense on it, offering before the Lord strange fire; which was not commanded them. And fire coming out from before the Lord destroyed them" (Lev. x. 1).

Now, my dear brethren, may we not very well ask, if such a ritual was once ordained by God as suitable to His service, why should there be any particular merit in great simplicity in the externals of religion? Why should we not try to make His worship as rich and splendid as we can? If we do so, we are only imitating Him and trying to carry out the principle which He established for His own worship.

Again, if we want a still higher example of worship, let us listen to the account St. John gives us of that which goes on around God's throne in heaven—as far as it can be represented to mortal eyes. "Behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne One sitting. And He that sat was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine-stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats four and twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders: and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which were the seven Spirits of God. And in the sight of the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes, before and behind. . . . And they rested not day and night saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. And when these living creatures gave glory, and honour, and benediction to Him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth on the throne and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power, because thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Apoc. iv. 11).

Nothing can be more stately and gorgeous than the vision which St. John gives us of the worship of "Him" that sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb in the Heavenly Jerusalem.

I said that in the nature of things there must be a ceremonial of some kind, and that every religion that ever was has something of the sort. I did not, however, my dear brethren, mean that the Catholic ritual contains nothing more than this, and is precisely the same in principle as the usages customary in Protestant churches. In these you have certain customs rigidly adhered to; you have a certain dress—a gown at one time, and a surplice at another. You find the minister reading from one place and preaching from another, and administering the Sacrament from a third, according to forms distinctly laid by law or usage. All this is necessary to ensure decorum in the public worship of God.

The Catholic Ritual is for the same purpose, but means much more. It has the richness and variety of

ceremonial which the Old Law enjoined, and for the very same reason. The splendours of the Jewish worship were an acknowledgment of the presence of God. The temple of Jerusalem was so splendid because it was the "House of God."

By this we mean not only that God was present there in the sense that He is present everywhere, but that He was present in some *special* way. If He had been there exactly, as He is throughout the universe, all the special marks of reverence would have been without meaning. It was not so. There, in that temple, He dwelt in an unusual way. His presence was manifested sensibly to the people; it was the place where He chose to receive homage and grant petitions. The place where God manifests His presence to His people is holy ground, and deserving of every mark of reverence. God spake to Moses from the burning bush, and said to him: "Come not nigh hither, but put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. iii. 5).

In the temple, on the extended wings of the cherubim, over the ark of the covenant, was the "mercy seat" of God, where His presence was continually manifested. It was for this reason that such extraordinary reverence was shown to the "Holy of Holies."

We read how Solomon dedicated the temple he had built: "And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord into its place, that is, the oracle of the temple into the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the cherubim, so that the cherubims spread their wings over the place in which the ark was set, and covered the ark itself and its stones," and "when they all sounded together both with trumpets, and voices, and cymbals, and organs, and with divers kinds of musical instruments, and lifted up their voices on high: the sound was heard afar off, so that when they began to praise the Lord and to say: Give glory to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever: the house of God was filled with a cloud, nor could the priests stand to minister by reason of the cloud. For the glory

of the Lord had filled the house of God" (Paral. v. 7—13).

It was this presence, this glory of the Lord filling the house, which was the plain reason for all the elaborate and beautiful preparations which abounded in the temple; and in the same way it is the special presence of God in the Catholic Church which gives a reason for a splendid Ritual.

If the church were a place where God is present, indeed, but present exactly as He is in every other part of His creation, there would be no use in a splendid ceremonial. You must even then have a Ritual of some kind, or you could not have a worship in common; but a ceremonial full of symbolical meaning, and signs of reverence, would be out of place if there was nothing to represent, and nothing special to reverence. If, for instance, a church is simply a place where people meet to say their prayers, and hear sermons, there is no sense in a ritual which expresses reverence and awe. Why should the building be different from any other building? Why should it be anything else than a convenient and decorous meeting place?

The ceremonial of the Catholic Church has this one great object to remind you of the special presence of God. "How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 17). It is different from all other places, because in every church there is a Presence which is not found elsewhere. Almighty God makes the church His house, and resides there by the Real Presence of our Lord on the altar, with a reality of which the mercy-seat of the ancient temple was only a figure.

Everything reminds you of this Presence. The shape of the church itself, and the portion railed off for the sanctuary; the lamp which is constantly kept burning before the tabernacle; the cross on the altar, surrounded by candles, denoting the place of the daily sacrifice. These are the perpetual memorials of our Lord's presence.

You cannot go into the church at any hour without

being reminded that, night and day, He is there. It doesn't matter whether there are crowds of worshippers, or whether you are there in gloom and solitude. It doesn't matter whether you are in a cathedral like St. Peter's, the grandest building that man can erect, or in a poor hut used as a church. You always see the signs of the same Great Presence—the insignia of royalty, I may say.

So it is with the Holy Mass. The priest in his vestments at the altar, the candles burning, the different ceremonies employed, so unlike anything to be seen elsewhere—all tell us of this great unseen Presence.

There is, however, something else clearly expressed in the Catholic ceremonial. It is that the Church is not a place of prayer only, but of action. There are many things in the ritual of the Church which can hardly be accounted for only by the special Divine Presence, and so it was with the Jewish temple. The idea of a special Presence of God was, almost necessarily, combined with the idea of sacrifice offered to Him, and it was because of the sacrifice that so elaborate a worship was ordained by God. Why were the priests clad in such mysterious garments?

See how the priests of the Old Law were clad: “He made of violet and purple, scarlet and fine linen, the vestments for Aaron to wear when he ministered in the holy places, as the Lord commanded Moses. So he made an ephod of gold, violet and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted linen . . . he prepared also two onyx stones, fast set and closed in gold, and graven, by the art of a lapidary, with the names of the children of Israel . . . he made also a rational with embroidered work, according to the work of the ephod . . . and little bells of purest gold, which they put between the pomegranates at the bottom of the tunic . . . a bell of gold, and a pomegranate, wherewith the high priest went adorned, when he discharged his ministry, as the Lord had commanded Moses” (Exod. xxxix. 1).

What do all these vestments and ornaments mean? They mean action. That the temple is not a place merely

of prayer, but a place where some great thing is done, and it is to do this great action that the priests are so adorned.

Thus it is with the Catholic Church. It is the special presence of God, and the perpetual Sacrifice appointed by our Lord, which is the key to all the Church's ritual. Without these two ideas, it must dwindle down to the poverty and "simplicity" which mark Protestant churches. If nothing is done in the churches, which is not also done outside them, there certainly seems no particular reason for ceremonial and solemnity; but if the Church is *really* the house of God, and He is present there in a more special way than elsewhere, and if He there requires a special recognition by Sacrifice of His Divine Presence, then it is plain that nothing can be too magnificent, or costly, or beautiful—nothing can be too carefully considered, or diligently executed for His service.

The Psalmist says: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth" (Ps. xxv. 8). You cannot, my dear brethren, be good Catholics without having some love and zeal for the beauty of God's house, and this you cannot have without understanding, at least generally, the meaning and object of what you see. The services of the Church, the decoration of the altar, the flowers, the lights and incense are not things of mere outward show. They are not meant to please the eyes and gratify the taste of the congregation. They are meant as a solemn acknowledgment of the presence of God in His Church, and a humble offering to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. They are meant to speak to your eyes and senses of our Lord hidden in His tabernacle, and residing amongst men for the love of you, and to tell you of the great things which Jesus is always doing amongst us. "There hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not."

The external objects and ceremonial of the Church are meant to make us at all times remember the reverence due to Him, that we may not forget, in the great-

ness of His condescension, that He is our Creator, and that we are but dust and ashes in His sight.

And yet something more. The ritual of the Church is one of those things which bind men in one great communion. By it we are united with past ages and with distant countries. The Mass has come down from the times of the apostles. The altar which we see, with its stone consecrated by the relics, reminds us of the days when the faithful assembled to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice on the tombs of the martyrs, not knowing how soon they might be called on to shed their blood for Christ. The lights which surround the altar may bring back to our minds the obscurity of the catacombs in which the Christians had to meet in times of persecution. The vestments, the forms and language of the Holy Mass are the very same, substantially, which St. Augustine brought with him when he came to England to convert our Saxon forefathers. We are united, therefore, with all ages of the Christian Church, not only in faith, but by the very prayers and ceremonies which they used in their day.

When we take part in the Holy Sacrifice, we cannot but feel that we are members of this great Universal Church, which unites all ages and all nations together. If we look higher still, and raise our eyes to the glorious Church in heaven, with which the militant Church on earth is united, we cannot but feel that the same bond of union still subsists. As we, in our poverty, are celebrating and honouring the presence amongst us of the "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," we are but faintly and feebly imitating the glorious worship of that heavenly Jerusalem where Christ is reigning with His saints.

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON XVII.

The Marriage State.

“And He said to them : Go you also into my vineyard ” (St. Matt. xx. 4).

IN the parable of the householder sending labourers into his vineyard, our Blessed Lord gives us a striking picture of the dealings of Almighty God with His creatures. We, my dear brethren, are His labourers; we have all one object, to work for Him; and one rule, which is to work according to His will. From the highest to the lowest, He sends us out into His vineyard, and assigns to us different tasks, according to His own good pleasure, and when evening comes He will reward us for the work we have performed.

Our Lord says to each one of us : “Go into my vineyard ;” but He does not send us all to the same part, or give to all the same work to do. In the vineyard there is an immense variety of work to be done, and all the labourers cannot possibly be engaged in the same kind of labour. To produce an abundant harvest, each one must perform the part of the work entrusted to him. So it is in human life. We all have to work for the glory of God ; but, in addition to the general duties we all owe to God and our neighbour, each one has his own particular sphere of work, which is the duty of his own state of life.

These two classes of work cannot be separated—that is, to be a good Christian you must be faithful, not only in the general duties you owe to God, but also in the special duties to which you yourselves are called. If you neglect these, it is quite clear that you are not doing your duty to Almighty God as you ought to do. If you were very diligent in prayer, and exact in performing all your duties to God, but, at the same time, were not con-

scientious and diligent in doing the work which belongs to your position in life—if, indeed, the one did not lead you to the other—you certainly would be very far from pleasing God.

The duties of the state of life to which God has called us are most important for many reasons. To begin with, they take up by far the greater portion of our time. The portion of our lives which is given *directly* to the service of God is very small in comparison: if, therefore, we do not take pains to perfect and sanctify our ordinary actions, so as to make them *indirectly*, at any rate, the work of God, our service will be very deficient.

“Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” These words are the very first lesson our Lord gave to men with His own lips, and are meant to teach us that we are always to be engaged, in some way or other, directly or indirectly, in doing the work for which we came into this world.

The ordinary duties of life are, besides, the chief things that men see. Our neighbours naturally look to see the results of our religion in our daily lives—and they have a right to look for such results. Our Lord tells us that “the kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (St. Matt. xiii. 33). Our religion is to be like this leaven, which is to be “hidden” in our daily lives till the whole is leavened.

It is most important, therefore, to dwell on the duties of different states of life. A priest has not only to exhort his flock in general to be good Christians, but he must also say to them individually, “Be a good father,” “be a good husband,” “be a good son,” “be conscientious in doing the work of your profession or trade.”

But, then, my dear brethren, here comes the difficulty. It is very hard to address exhortations to a congregation of people which apply to only one half of those present. It is very difficult to preach to one class, to exhort or reprove them, and dwell upon all the obligations that apply to their state of life, in the presence of

others to whom what is said does not apply. For this reason the duties of different states are not spoken of so frequently, or so minutely as might be desired.

Notwithstanding this difficulty, however, it is very important, when treating of the Commandments, to speak in turn of all the principal states of life. After all, what is said is sure to apply, with some little modification, to most people at one time or another of their lives, even if it is not applicable at the present moment.

When we come to speak of the different conditions of the social life of men, it is clear that the marriage state is the most prominent and striking. The duties of this state are so important, and the results of their being well or ill done are so serious—whether for good or evil—that I cannot avoid speaking of it, in spite of the great difficulties which it presents.

The marriage tie is the bond which binds mankind together, and on its inviolability and purity the welfare of Christian society depends. If the Christian family is what it ought to be, it is pretty sure that society will be moral and religious; but if family union is once broken, and husbands and wives, parents and children, cease to do their duty to each other, Christian society is in the greatest peril.

It is for this reason that our Lord so distinguished the Sacrament of Matrimony. He raised the marriage contract to the dignity of a sacrament, and made it the figure of His own union with His Church. It is for the same reason that our Lord made a marriage feast the occasion of His first miracle. He sat down to table with the guests at a wedding feast, and turned the water into wine to show the particular favour with which He regarded the married state, and the dignity He desired to confer on it.

When our Lord chose to establish a household on earth for Himself, and to dwell so many years with Mary and Joseph, in the holy house of Nazareth, He did not disdain to set an example to us of the virtues which every Christian family ought to exhibit. What

could show us more clearly the importance of the married state, and the sacred nature of the duties belonging to it ?

Marriage can hardly fail to be a turning-point in the life of any man or woman. As a general rule, the whole of a man's life, for good or evil, is affected by the sort of marriage he has made. If he has married well—that is, judiciously and prudently—he has put himself into a condition which gives every hope of happiness. He has made it much easier for himself to lead a steady and religious life, and has taken the best possible means for securing perseverance. Very often we find young people who have been leading indifferent and, perhaps, sinful lives before their marriage, who have afterwards become very satisfactory and good Christians.

Unfortunately, however, my dear brethren, the contrary is sometimes the case. We find instances of young men and young women who were very good and religious once, but, unfortunately, they made foolish marriages, and their marriage has turned them away from God. If a good Christian marriage makes the road to heaven easy, a bad one makes it very difficult. A foolish marriage often puts such obstacles in the way of duty, that nothing but very special grace from God can overcome them.

The Sacrament of Matrimony gives great graces, and those who correspond faithfully with these graces are enabled to overcome even the difficulties of an ill-considered marriage, but it is always a great risk.

When we think of the great duties which men and women take upon themselves when they are married, and the important effects which marriage will certainly have on their future lives, we should imagine that all good and sensible people would make it a matter of very grave consideration. We should naturally suppose that they would think very seriously of the duties they were undertaking, and consider well how the marriage would affect the happiness and spiritual condition of the rest of their lives. Unfortunately, we too often see people who seem to lose all common sense on the occasion. They rush into marriage with less consideration than

they would give to the most trifling affairs of life, and very often with scarcely any appreciation of the responsibilities they are taking upon themselves.

This is, perhaps, because they are not accustomed to dwell upon the serious obligations involved in marriage. Men are too apt to look upon it as a matter of convenience and worldly interest, or as a matter of fancy. They do not ask themselves often enough whether they are prepared to take upon themselves serious duties and heavy responsibilities; and whether the alliance they propose will help or hinder them in the way of their salvation. This most important point is too often quite left out of sight. Let the other considerations of worldly prudence and of affection come in as they *ought* to do, but in their right place, as subordinate to the great idea of duty.

About their marriage, more than about anything else, people should ask the question, "*Quid hoc ad aternitatem*—How will this affect my salvation?"

The natural consequence of this carelessness in entering into the wedded state is that many people have very little idea of the duties belonging to it. When the first excitement of a new position is passed, do they think much of the duties of their new state? They have solemnly undertaken before God—what? Unfortunately, a great many do not trouble themselves to consider; and yet certainly they will be judged by these duties. God, my dear brethren, does not forget the obligations and duties we have taken upon ourselves because we do not choose to think of them.

Let us, then, speak about the duties of the married state. What are they? When people are married they undertake a twofold duty—a duty to society, and a duty to each other. They are called by God to a very honourable condition, to which are attached many graces and blessings; but it is on a very distinct condition. The condition is that they undertake the charge of rearing and educating the children that it may please God to send them. This is a charge which involves a great many inconveniences, troubles, and pains to both parties,

as God has been pleased to distribute them. These troubles are part of the inheritance of our fallen nature, and men and women are alike bound to take their share.

If they do not enter loyally into the performance of these duties, but shirk them when they are irksome or painful, they are disregarding the special obligations of their state, and failing in their duty to God and to men. It is not very uncommon to hear married people murmuring at these burdens, and finding fault with each other—complaining, perhaps, that they have too many children—just as if they had a right to be exempted from the ordinary and natural troubles of the state of life they have chosen to enter.

The charge of a family, should God give them one, is the great duty which married people owe to society; but they have many others. They are placed in a position which gives them a great influence on all around them, and they have in consequence very important duties to fulfil towards their neighbours. I want, however, to-day to speak more particularly of the duties which married people owe to each other.

Husbands and wives undertake to “love and be faithful to one another.” A man undertakes to give his wife his love, and an exclusive sort of love of which he has no right to give a share to anyone else. “A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife” (St. Mark x. 7). This love ought to be a real and heartfelt love, and, at the same time, in reason, a demonstrative love—that is to say, a love which shows itself in outward manner. I say this because you sometimes find married people who rather assume an air of indifference, as if it were rather a fine thing to appear cold and distant to each other.

The foundation of this love ought to be respect. There is great danger of married people forgetting the mutual respect they ought to have, and saying and doing things to each other which are disrespectful, sometimes positively rude—things which they would never dream of saying to anyone else. It is a very common thing to find people who are very polite to strangers—whose good

will or ill-will is unimportant—and at the same time rude and careless in manner to their own husbands and wives.

No love can be kept up very long without respect, and no respect will last if not accompanied by some *outward* sign of respect; it is, therefore, very important for married people not to allow themselves to fall into rudeness of manner and disrespectful behaviour to each other.

When there is real respect, there is always confidence. If you cannot trust a person, it is plain that you have not any respect for him. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that husbands and wives should show the esteem they have for each other by mutual confidence. Before entering upon so close a union as married life, people should be pretty sure that they can trust each other, and must then take care not to allow anything to interfere with the confidence which they have undertaken to give.

There is scarcely anything more destructive to the happiness of married life than jealousy of disposition and the habit of mistrust. A jealous temper becomes worse in proportion as you give way to it, and can always find plenty of things to exercise itself upon; you may be quite sure that grounds of complaint will never be wanting. If husbands and wives are jealous, and always suspecting and watching each other, no amount of precaution or prudence is sufficient to avoid giving pretexts for jealousy. The only hope of peace is in the determination of the parties to strike at the root of the evil by getting rid of the jealous temper. If they can only make up their minds to be loyal to each other, and give each other generous confidence, it is probable that all the grounds of suspicion will speedily vanish.

It is necessary, however, on the other hand, to avoid giving unreasonable grounds for suspicion. Husbands and wives have no right to do imprudent and unusual things—things which are likely to look suspicious in the eyes of the world. It is not enough to keep out of real harm, but you must also try to avoid the *appearance* of

evil, especially where an apparently well founded suspicion can produce so much evil as it does in married life.

Love is founded in mutual respect and the confidence arising from it; but it shows itself most in sympathy—in having, that is, a community of *feeling*. Supposing, for instance, that you do not care in the least for your husband's friends, or for his pursuits, and allow yourself to think everything connected with them is a great annoyance, about which you cannot be expected to trouble yourself—how can there be much *sympathy* between you and your husband? Again, a woman is quite indifferent to her husband's opinions; and, in trifling things, at any rate, does not care to find out or attend to his wishes. By this she shows a want of sympathy which is hardly consistent with love. If, as married people, you have no idea of interchanging confidences or consulting each other in difficulties, and do not share each other's pains and pleasures—in short, have no *sympathy*—how is it possible for you to show your love, or to have a great deal to show?

But perhaps the most important, and certainly the most difficult, part of the love which married people owe to each other is mutual forbearance—bearing patiently and kindly with each other's faults. This is obviously a very serious part of the duty of their state; and no love which does not include forbearance will last for very long.

People sometimes complain unreasonably of the faults of their husbands and wives, but when they married they knew what they were undertaking. They knew perfectly well that they were not going to marry angels, and that, as a matter of course, a great deal of forbearance would be necessary. By forbearance we mean that each party should bear patiently with the weaknesses and deficiencies of the other, and make all possible allowance for them: and not only weaknesses, but positive faults and sins. Besides this, you must be tolerant of differences of opinion, and of different ways of thought, and also of different habits. It is sometimes easier for people to pardon serious faults than to overlook diver-

gencies from the ideas and usages to which they have been accustomed.

This sort of forbearance is obviously necessary if there is to be any permanent peace. St. Paul tells us that we have our treasure "in earthen vessels," and, from our very constitution, we cannot avoid in some degree giving pain to our neighbours, and wounding their feelings from time to time. This is true of the common intercourse of life, and it must evidently be more conspicuously so in a state in which two people are so constantly and intimately brought together as man and wife. In the nature of things they must frequently give each other cause of annoyance in little things, if not in great ones, and, therefore, the love and mutual forbearance, by which alone these small troubles can be overcome, are the necessary virtues of their state.

I am afraid married people do not consider often enough the terms on which they have taken each other. "I take thee, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, till death do us part, and thereto I plight thee my troth." These are very solemn words, and it would be well if all husbands and wives thought of them more frequently, and remembered that their conduct towards each other will have some day to be compared with the promises made and implied in this covenant.

The last and most important part of the love which ought to exist between married people, is that which shows itself in spiritual help and care. It would be a very poor love which cared for all the little passing details of life, and spent itself in little momentary acts of kindness and demonstrations of affection, without any thought for the all-important future. We find this, however, too often: wives who seem to take no interest in the religious state of their husbands, and think it no business of theirs; and husbands, in like manner, who do not consider themselves bound to take any trouble for their wives. And yet we cannot doubt that this is one of the great ends of Matrimony. God intended that man and wife should walk hand-in-hand through life, and help each other through all its rough and hard ways,

through all its decline and weakness, both in body and in spirit. The marriage tie was intended as means by which each one should have some one specially charged to help him, to sympathize with him in trouble, to strengthen him in temptation, to help him if he falls, and to stand by him to the last, though all the rest of the world should fail him. It was meant not only to make life pleasanter, but also to make salvation easier, and those who take no thought beyond this world are doing the work which they have undertaken in a very unsatisfactory way.

This sort of neglect is, as I have said, common enough; sometimes it is really *neglect* and a carelessness about spiritual things, but more frequently, perhaps, it arises from a sort of shyness, which sometimes keep people from talking freely about the things nearest to their hearts. There is, it is true, a certain reason for this. Every human being, man or woman, married or unmarried, has a right to be free and uncontrolled in his own conscience. He may bind himself to another in worldly things, and may give up his own will, and put himself into the hands of another in such matters; but in conscience it is not so. You may not lawfully give up the rights of your conscience to anyone, father or mother, husband or wife, since the very first of all duties is to do what your own conscience tells you is right before God. This sometimes creates a difficulty between people so closely bound together as husband and wife, and certainly makes a good deal of caution and forbearance necessary in dealing with religious matters. It will not do for either party to compel or over-persuade the other to act against the dictates of conscience. On the other hand, it is a great mistake for husbands or wives to be over-exacting or censorious in trifling matters, as if their position gave them authority to dictate, or to call each other to account in religious matters. You are bound to respect each other's rights in all things, but specially in matters of conscience.

The feeling of non-interference, which up to a certain point is a very right one, does not, however, by any means justify people saying: "Matters of conscience are

no concern of mine." This is like saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" You are bound to be considerate, and to respect all just rights of conscience; but, also, you are bound to do all that patience, and diligence, and gentleness can do for each other's spiritual welfare. St. Paul tells St. Timothy to "be instant in season and out of season"—to "reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine" (2 Tim. iv. 2); and this is just what husbands and wives should do for each other when necessary—not, indeed, by much talking, which would be out of place, but by making use of all the thousand little opportunities for good which their state supplies to them.

I must not forget to mention the most efficacious way in which they may do good to each other's souls—the method of doing good which will, perhaps, avail when others cannot be used, or fail in effect—that is, by persevering good example. If you are earnest, and self-denying in the practice of your religion, your example can hardly fail to do good—that is, if your conduct, generally, is consistent with your religion. If you are very zealous in the practice of your religion, and take a great deal of trouble to observe all the laws of the Church, but do not carry this religious spirit into the duties of your state, then your very zeal may do harm; but real and consistent good example is certain to have a good effect. Good example is, then, one unfailing means of doing good in the married state, and one which husbands and wives owe to each other.

These, then, are some of the principal duties of married people towards each other—love and fidelity, mutual respect and forbearance in their ordinary intercourse, as well as assistance, encouragement, and good example in the way of their salvation.

I must say one word more about the extreme importance of these duties. The great and solemn tie which binds husband and wife together has this effect—it makes little things into great ones. Many things, which are comparatively trifling in themselves, become matters of importance when they seriously affect the principal duties of your state; and, in the same way.

many faults, which are insignificant in themselves, become serious. For instance, there are many little faults of manner, many acts of roughness or selfishness, which do not matter very much in ordinary society, which may, nevertheless, be destructive of the peace of your home, and almost incompatible with the due performance of the duties of your state. These things, then, have obviously become very important by reason of the solemn obligations which you took upon yourselves when you entered the marriage state. Unfortunately, married people do not always see it in this light; on the contrary, they think they may indulge themselves in a thousand little faults of temper, and acts of selfishness in their daily domestic life, which they would not dream of giving way to before strangers. "What does it matter what I say or do, if it is only before my own husband or wife, or before my own family?" That is the feeling on which people often act; whereas, in reality, their behaviour to strangers is *very* unimportant in comparison with their behaviour to their own husbands and wives.

I have now spoken, my dear brethren, of the ordinary duties of married people towards each other, but there is a good deal more to be said on the subject, which I propose to treat in my next sermon.

It may appear to many people that these things are small, and that there is no necessity for going into details; but, after all, life is made up of details. If we are to cultivate the portion of the vineyard which our Lord has entrusted to our care, so as to make it fruitful, we must not disdain to learn even the smallest things connected with it. Our work lies in the state of life to which we have been called, and we cannot be too diligent in learning all that belongs to it. When evening is come, and the Master calls all the labourers to pay them their hire, our reward will be, not in proportion to the importance of what we have been doing, or to the success we have obtained, but to the diligence and care with which we have laboured at the work entrusted to us. Amen.

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XVIII.

Husbands and Wives.

"Render, therefore, to all men their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due: custom to whom custom: fear to whom fear: honour to whom honour" (Rom. xiii. 7).

THE apostle here calls our attention, my dear brethren, to the virtue of justice, and tells us that we are to give to "all men their dues." Justice is, in one sense, the most important of all virtues, because it comes into all the dealings of men with each other, and on it the whole framework of society is based. The word justice is generally applied to fair dealing in money matters; to buying and selling, and other things, in which the rights of property are concerned; but in its wider sense it means giving to every creature the rights, privileges, and consideration due to it.

In this sense it is a very difficult duty. You will find a great many who are charitable and kind, but comparatively few people who are, in all respects, just. The virtue of justice requires two things—first, the power of seeing clearly and fairly what are the rights of others; and, then, willingness to observe those rights on all occasions. "Be just before you are generous," is a very common saying, and if you do not take the trouble to see and acknowledge the *rights* of others, they will not thank you very much for being generous to them. A great many of the troubles of mankind arise from a want of the sense of justice—troubles between nations—enmities between classes—bitterness between rich and poor, masters and servants—quarrels between parents and their children: most of these troubles arise from a want of due attention to the *rights* of others.

The virtue is at least as important in the married state as in any other relation of life, and it is in this point of view that I am going to consider it.

Husbands and wives often live unhappily together, not so much because they are not willing to do their duty to each other, but because they have never fairly considered what are the strict rights of each party. No kindness can ever quite make up for a want of a just appreciation of the rights of things—justice must be the foundation, and then there is abundant room for charity. I think it expedient, therefore, in this place to say a few words about the distinctive rights which belong to husband and wife by the law of God.

The husband, in the first place, has a great position, and with it great rights, since he holds in his own household, in a special manner, the place of Almighty God, "From whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15). Nothing can be more striking than the way in which this position of dignity and reverence was given to the great saint whom our Lord chose for His earthly father—St. Joseph. He was made distinctly the head of the household—although that household consisted of none less in dignity than Jesus and His Blessed Mother—and the privileges of his position were recognized in all things. The commands of God were made known through St. Joseph, and to him was entrusted the charge of carrying them out, so that all the movements of the Holy Family were regulated by Him: "Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, saying, Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee: for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him" (St. Matt. ii. 13).

A similar position belongs by right to every father and husband. He has a right, to begin with, to the *first* place—he has a right that neither parents, nor children, nor anyone else, should ever be put before him, or be more considered than he is. Whatever he may be elsewhere, he has a right to be the first person in his own home, with his own wife and children. It is necessary

to mention this, because women sometimes get so much taken up with their duties as mothers, and the necessary care of their children, that they forget what is due by *right* to their husbands, and act as if the children and their wants and comforts were the first thing to be attended to, and that everything else might be left to take its chance. We read in the Book of Kings how "Elkana her husband said to her: Anna, why weepest thou? and why dost thou not eat? and why dost thou afflict thy heart? Am not I better to thee than ten children?" (1 Kings i. 7.) The husband, at any rate, has a right to the first place, and if any of his children are put before him, it is a perversion of all law and justice.

To the husband belongs the right to lead. Where he goes it is the duty of the wife to follow; where he dwells, there must she dwell—that is, wherever his wishes are at all reasonable. It is for the wife to say to her husband, by the law of the state which she has entered, what Ruth said to Noemi out of charity, "Be not against me to desire that I should leave thee and depart, for whithersoever thou shalt go I will go, and where thou shalt dwell I also will dwell; thy people shall be my people" (Ruth i. 16).

With this first place goes a great *deference*—that is, respect shown by attention to his wishes, not only in great things, but in small ones, shown by respectful, dutiful words, and consideration even for his whims in trifles—it is all these things that show *deference*, and it is precisely to this deference that a husband has a right. This is shown specially by politeness of manner, and it is a sad thing that women sometimes fancy that politeness and good manners are thrown away upon their own husbands, however profusely they may display them to other people.

A great deal of the unhappiness of married life comes from a want of the proper deference and respect due from wives to their husbands. It is a very common thing to find women who indulge themselves in saying all sorts of disagreeable and insulting things to their husbands when they are irritated. They will pour out a

stream of provoking language, which nothing will stop, and which is the fruitful cause of half the evils of married life. It is true, there is very often provocation, but that does not take away from the evil effects of their conduct. Every word which is inconsistent with the fundamental duties of the state of life in which you are placed, is sure, in the long run, to bring evil with it.

A husband, moreover, has a right that his wife should be jealous of his honour—that is, of the dignity, position, and consideration which he holds amongst other men. The Holy Scripture gives this as the distinction of a “valiant woman:” “Her husband is honourable in the gates when he sitteth among the senators of the land” (Prov. xxxi. 23). It is quite clear that a woman who has no feeling for her husband’s dignity, and no care to see that he is treated with proper respect, both at home and abroad, is very far from understanding the duties of her state.

A husband, moreover, has, according to the general plan of Providence, the duty of providing for his family. He is the ordinary and natural bread-winner for his wife and children. In this capacity he has to work hard, to go out early and come home late, and “earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.” On the other hand, he has a right that his wife and children should assist him as far as they can, and make things as easy for him as possible. If they cannot help in any other way, they are at least bound to do so by care and economy. A wife who does not trouble herself to consider what her husband’s means are, and what he can afford, but spends recklessly and buys whatever she fancies, is very seriously neglecting the duties of her state. She is treating her husband, not as one with whom she has the closest possible union of interests, but as a person whose business it is to get money for her to spend. We, unfortunately, see a good many wives who do not seem to care how hard their husbands have to work, or what anxieties may be accumulated upon their husbands, so long as they have enough to spend on themselves and their children.

Such conduct as this is clearly wrong, and must ultimately destroy all domestic peace. Again, if a man is bound to go out to his work, he has a right to expect that his wife shall keep his home in order. That is the special sphere of duty in which she is bound to labour. The Holy Scripture, giving a description of the mother of a family, says: "She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children rose up and called her blessed: her husband, and he praised her" (Prov. xxxi. 27).

A great deal of the happiness of married life depends upon things that appear very small, and this in all classes of society. A man comes home from his day's work, and finds that everything indoors has been neglected—nothing has been done for his comfort, that no preparations have been made for his return; no one apparently has been thinking of him or what he has had to do. Neglect of this kind cannot fail to create bitterness and dissension, and we see the consequences of it every day. A man, therefore, who has to work for his wife and family, has a right they should assist him, or, at least, do what they can to support and comfort him in his toil.

Besides all this, a woman is bound to be obedient to her husband. This is a very unpleasant thing to talk about in an age when the idea of obedience for God's sake seems to have gone so much out of fashion; but such is the law of God. It is, indeed, to be a *willing* obedience, and a reasonable obedience, and obedience shown in all lawful things; but a *real* obedience, which means a real giving up of your own way—not merely *pretending* to give up your own way, and then getting it by stratagem or obstinacy, but real obedience for God's sake.

Let us hear what the Holy Scripture says on this subject: "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord. Because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. . . . Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things" (Eph. v. 22). "Wives, be sub-

ject to your husbands, as it behoveth in the Lord ” (Col. iii. 18). St. Peter says : “ In like manner also let wives be subject to their husbands : that if any believe not the word, they may be won without the word, by the conversation of the wives ” (1 St. Peter iii. 1).

The obedience of a wife, however, although, as I have said, it is to be a *real* obedience, and not a pretence, is not the same thing as the obedience of a child—that is, it is not the minute, implicit, unquestioning obedience which parents have a right to expect from young children. The ground of this sort of obedience is that the children are too young and ignorant to guide themselves ; they are in a state of training, their reason is imperfect, and their rights are, consequently, in abeyance. This state of things makes it essential that they should be under minute personal control. The kind of subjection which a man can ask from his wife is of a very different sort. It is the obedience of a reasonable, intelligent partner, who is quite able to judge for herself and act independently in matters of detail, and who has a right to have an opinion of her own. To attempt to exact from a wife the sort of obedience required from young children would be an act of tyranny.

On the other hand, too, the wife has her rights, and these are just as sacred and inviolable as her husband's. She has a right to be treated, not as a slave or a play-thing, but as a companion. She has a right to be placed in a position of honour and dignity, so that she shall be respected by all in her house. She has a right also to trust and to confidence, as an intelligent partner and sharer in all things—in worldly affairs, in plans and feelings; and, as a rule, in everything. “ The heart of her husband trusteth in her ” (Prov. xxxi. 11). Men sometimes forget this sort of right which their wives have. They are kind and indulgent, and never say a harsh word or do an uncivil thing; and yet they do not allow their wives to know anything of their affairs or feelings, or of really important concerns of any kind. A man who acts in this way, is not treating his wife as an intelligent companion and real partner, but rather as a

child and plaything. We may rely upon it that love and kindness of this sort can never be satisfactory, because they have not the foundation of justice at the bottom; the man does not recognize that his wife has a right to be more than a plaything.

Besides this, of course, as I before said, a wife has a right to an undivided love, which may not be given to anyone else. In its own way, it is quite exclusive, and may not be shared. This love has a special element of tenderness and gentleness, of demonstrativeness and protection. If the Holy Scriptures speak of the reverence due to husbands, they speak as strongly of the great love and tenderness which men ought to give to their wives. "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter towards them" (Col. iii. 19). "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it. . . So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ does the Church. . . . Nevertheless, let every one of you, in particular, love his wife as himself, and let the wife fear her husband" (Eph. v. 25).

The words of this last passage, in which the apostle admonishes men that they ought to nourish and cherish their wives "as their own bodies," describe, in very eloquent words, the right which a woman has to care and protection from her husband. She has a right to be protected from all roughness and violence either of deed or word, from whatever quarter it may be threatened, as far as her husband's power goes. If he is bound to protect his wife against violence and insult from others, still more plainly is it his duty to abstain from violence or rough usage himself. The bad treatment of wives by their husbands is one of the worst blots on Christian society, and one of the most unpardonable and disgraceful crimes that men can commit. When a man beats, or insults, or half starves his wife, by spending his earnings on himself, and leaving her unprovided, he is not only doing a cruel and unmanly

thing, but is sinning in a most flagrant manner against the first duties of his state.

I have said so much about the rights of both parties, because all real agreement and peace must be founded in justice; but there is abundant room for charity also. It would clearly be impossible for people to do their duty in the marriage state by thinking of justice only; there is also a constant need of charity. Justice and charity, however, are not opposed, as people sometimes think. Charity does not mean forgetting your own rights or giving them up. It is not real charity which makes people give up the proper authority and position which God has given them. For example, if a husband gives up his proper place as leader and guide, out of affection to his wife, and allows himself to be put in a subordinate position—it is not charity, but weakness. It is not charity, because it is contrary to the real good of both parties to be thus placed in a false and unnatural position. In the same way, it is not charity if a wife allows herself to be passed over in her own house, and to be degraded from her proper rank as mistress of the house. If she yields to her husband in every thing, right or wrong, wise or foolish, without remonstrance, she ceases to be the counsellor and support of her husband, and becomes simply his slave. To yield in this way is not charity, because it is *not* for her husband's real good, but is the worst possible thing for him, as well as for herself.

Real charity is shown in that gentle, yielding spirit, which makes people forbearing and considerate in the assertion of their strict right, and ready to yield wherever it is really desirable to do so. Charity makes husbands and wives anxious for each other's happiness; it makes them study each other's feelings and wishes, and take all possible pains to avoid wounding or hurting each other. "Charity is patient, is kind." It is the virtue which keeps married people from little foolish quarrels, or, if it cannot always do that, it, at any rate, prevents them, even when angry, from saying or doing hard things which will not easily be forgotten.

Charity, moreover, makes them ready to forgive of-

fences, and make up differences, and is besides shown in married life, by a large-hearted and generous interest in all that concerns the other party. You cannot have a real love for any one without being interested in all that is dear to your friend, and this applies very strongly to the case of married people. If a woman's love for her husband is not a mere selfish feeling, she will have some room in her heart for those who are dear to him, and a desire to be on cordial and intimate terms with them. You find women who at once set themselves against their husband's families, and seem determined to keep them, as far as possible, at a distance. Sometimes they are not contented with this, but do their best to bring about misunderstandings and quarrels, and are not satisfied till they have estranged their husbands from their own nearest and dearest relatives. Nothing can be farther from real love than conduct like this. It is not love at all; it is only a mixture of selfishness and jealousy.

There is the greatest possible scope for charity, as well as for discretion and good judgment, in all your relations with the family of your husband or wife. You must have, in the first place, a real and honest desire to get on well and cordially with them, and then the charity and forbearance requisite to avoid giving or taking offence, and the still greater charity necessary, easily and pleasantly, to get over all the little difficulties which may arise.

With all the care that man can use, unhappy marriages will sometimes occur. Men and women take each other "for better, for worse," and sometimes the conduct of one party may be the severest of earthly trials to the other. Then, indeed, does the husband or wife need charity, and charity of a heroic description—and not only charity, but patience, to take up the cross, and courage to go on always trusting in God. No amount of bad conduct on either side will, as you know, my dear brethren, ever break the solemn tie which binds the parties together, and it is their duty to make the best of it, however hard the case may be.

The duty of a Christian, under these sad circumstances, is a painful, but a simple one. He is bound always to remember the nature of the bonds which unite him to his partner, and the obligations which those bonds entail. But charity wants a good deal more of you than this. You must go on always keeping up an interest and a concern in your erring husband or wife, no matter what has divided you. Who shall reclaim a man if his own wife forgets him, and shuts her heart against him? What chance has he in this life if she turns against him? How many a bad or weak man has, at last, been reclaimed by a faithful wife! This is, indeed, the crowning triumph of charity. But even if there is no hope of doing much for redemption in this world, there is always the hope of doing something for the world to come by patience and charity. St. Paul says: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband" (1 Cor. vii. 14). If he could say this even when speaking of pagans and idolaters, how much more hope is there that the charity of the believing husband or wife may do good amongst Christians!

It is not only in these cases, however, that there is great need of charity. When sickness and old age come upon us, we shall certainly be a great burden to somebody, and it is precisely this burden which married people mutually undertake. It is, therefore, one of the most serious duties of their state to help each other in sickness of mind or body.

It will, of course, very often happen that attendance like this is irksome and painful in itself, and involves a great deal of self-sacrifice. You cannot do your duty to a sick husband or wife without giving up your own inclinations and amusements, and doing a great many things which are unpleasant to you.

And now I come to the last great work of charity. You have bound yourselves together "till death do part you," and some day or other death has to come to announce that parting. When the last sickness comes, and the last separation is at hand, then it is that the ten-

derness and love of husband and wife must be shown. It is your care and your duty to smooth that last and painful passage for the partner of your life. It is the time for a good husband or wife to be forgetful of self, and to do all that man can do to alleviate the pain, to support, to comfort, and cheer the last hours of his suffering companion.

But all physical and material comfort will be of very little avail, and will be but a miserable assistance in the hour of death, unless your help extends also to the preparation for eternity. Your marriage was meant to enable you to attain your last end and work out your salvation, and the bond that has united you in life is but a trifling thing, if you do not look forward to renewing that fellowship, and some day coming together before the throne of God, to thank Him for all that your earthly union has done for you.

Who can tell how much influence a faithful husband or wife can exert at that last hour? Take, for instance, a loving wife beside the death-bed of her husband—how much is in her power? She can suggest devout thoughts, and gently lead his mind to good, and she can help him to look forward and upward, and to forget the pains of the moment in the hope of a happy eternity. She can help him to place his trust in God, and to be resigned to His will, and penitent for his sins; she can suggest to him, better than anyone else, to be patient in suffering, and to unite all the distress and pain of a last illness to the sufferings of our Lord upon the cross.

All this, however, will be very little unless she also takes pains to procure for him the consolations of religion. We sometimes see people who are so foolish that they will never admit, even to themselves, that those they love are in danger of death, or else are so afraid of shocking and distressing them, that they will not give their friends any warning of the danger they are in, or the need they have of receiving the last Sacraments. A fine sort of friendship and tenderness is this—to risk eternal salvation of those dear to you, because you are too selfish or too timid to give a word of warning in due season!

The greatest care, then, of every good husband and wife ought to be to secure that the Sacraments shall be administered to the dying without fail and without delay, and to do their own part in making preparation for these Sacraments.

And when the last comes, and nothing else can be done, at least there is prayer; and we are quite sure that God, who is always ready to hear the prayers of His creatures, will not fail to give effect to the supplications of a faithful husband or wife, asking for mercy by the death-bed of the one dearest in life.

And now, my dear brethren, I have spoken at some length of the duties of the marriage state, and it only remains to consider how great is the crown which the Sacrament of Matrimony bestows on all those husbands and wives who really understand and conscientiously perform the duties of the holy state they have embraced.

All society is a debtor to them: a debtor to them for the children whom they send forth for its strength and ornament—a debtor for the great good that husband and wife can do, even with small means, if they act zealously together for the good of their brethren. The Church is a debtor to them for training up her children, and doing a work in them which no other could effect. God Himself is a debtor to them, since they have taken upon themselves the office which is the image of His creative power—the office of raising up children to Him, and training them to give glory to their Creator.

Listen to the words of that blessing with which Holy Church dismisses them when they enter upon their career: “May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and Himself fulfil His blessing upon you: that you may see your children’s children unto the third and fourth generation, and have everlasting life without end, by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen.

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XIX.

Parents and Children.

“And which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?” (St. Luke xi. 11.)

WHEN our Lord would lead His disciples to rely with confidence on the mercy of God, He appeals, as a most convincing proof, to the natural tenderness of a father's heart, and says: “If you, then, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good spirit to them that ask Him?” Paternal affection is so deeply rooted in man's nature, that any parent who is cruel to his own children is looked upon by every one as a monster, and all mankind rise up against him. What father would give his children a stone for bread, or a serpent for a fish?

When we come, however, to providing the food for the soul and the understanding, then it is very different; and we, unfortunately, find a good many who give a stone for bread, if they do not even give the serpent instead of the fish, by providing poison in place of nourishment.

A parent's duty to his children is very simple in itself—to love his children, to take proper care of them, to educate them, and to start them properly in life. All this seems very easy; but a great deal is contained in these few words, which people do not always see. You have to love your children; but loving does not merely mean making pets or playthings of them. It does not consist in fondling, and kissing, and calling them pretty names; if it did, there would be no need, perhaps, to say anything about it. All these endearments are natural and very well in their way, but they are *not* love, and are quite consistent with *want* of love.

These things are mere instinct, and are nothing, sometimes, but self-love, and experience shows us, only too often, that many mothers who are always fondling their children, and many fathers who make playthings of them in the most endearing fashion, are really their children's worst enemies.

Real love contains a great many things. Besides mere tenderness, it means patience and forbearance—it means watchfulness and taking trouble—it means, above all, self-sacrifice. You must have for your children an intelligent love—that is, a love which looks anxiously to the real good of its object, and does not expend itself in mere outward display of affection.

“Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely . . . seeketh not her own” (1 Cor. xiii. 4). These words tell you what parental love should be like. It must be patient, and kind, and not self-seeking. The very first essential is patience and forbearance, for without them all the tenderness in the world will not be of much use. It constantly happens that irrevocable evil both to body and mind results to children from the impatience of their parents; these parents have plenty of love, or think they have, but they have no forbearance, and they say and do in a moment things which have an ill effect on their children for their whole lives. Impatience like this occasionally results in injuries of body, but much more frequently is the harm done to the soul and disposition of their children. A sense of injustice and caprice, and a confusion of right and wrong, are often enough occasioned in children simply by want of temper and forbearance on the part of their parents. “And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger” (Eph. vi. 4).

To patience must be joined watchfulness. You are not to be forbearing by simply not seeing the faults of your children, or persuading yourself that they are not faults, but by watching and waiting to see how they may be best corrected. It is very easy to shut your eyes; the difficulty is to keep them open, and still to be patient and forbearing.

“ But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way ” (St. Matt. xiii. 29). This is the explanation of a great many of the evils that arise in the world, and it is especially true of the education of children. When their parents were not looking—when they had relaxed the proper vigilance which they were bound to exercise over their children—the enemy came and oversowed cockle, and the good seed was choked up and perished.

It is your duty, therefore, to be always watchful in the care of your children. It is not enough to look after them at certain times, when, for example, they are in your presence, or are engaged in their studies; you must be watchful over them at all times, quite as much during their hours of play as when they are engaged in serious duties. This does not mean that you must always keep them in sight, or never allow them any reasonable liberty, and it does not mean that you are always to be interfering with everything they say or do; but it means that you are to take pains to find out the company they keep, the way they behave to each other and to strangers, the nature of their employments and amusements, the sort of ideas and habits they are forming, and so forth.

All this can be done without over restraint or harshness. Those who wish to get any real knowledge of their own children, must take care not to be too severe with them, even when in fault; they should try to win the children's confidence by gentleness and patience, instead of frightening them away with sternness.

I ought, first, to speak of those parents who, instead of educating their children, positively injure them, and teach them evil by precept or example. I will, however, treat of this part of the subject on some other occasion, and now proceed to consider more in detail the duty of parents in the education of their children.

One great object of family life is to provide that the young should be properly educated—that is, prepared for the place they will have to fill in after life. Of their very nature, all children need instruction, and God has made you their parents, and given you authority over

them, chiefly that you, who know better, may teach them, and that you, who are stronger, may guide them.

A good education is generally the greatest part of what parents have to give to their children—very often almost the whole of what they can give; and, as a rule, the future that waits their children is, to a great degree, dependent upon the training they have received.

In spite of all these considerations, however, you will find plenty of people who profess to love their children, and yet are utterly careless about the sort of education they give them; and this is true, not only of very poor people, but of a good many who have abundant means of bringing up their children well, if only they chose to make use of them.

I should like here, my dear brethren, to notice a sort of excuse which people make to themselves—which you, I dare say, have heard a great many times. Fathers and mothers sometimes try to throw the responsibility of their children's education upon other people. They say: "I have got a good governess (or master), whom I pay well, and I cannot be expected to do any more: I cannot pretend to look after the children myself;" or a mother will say: "I leave all the charge of the children's education to their father—it is for him to attend to it;" or it may be the other way on; and a man will say: "I make it a rule never to interfere with my wife's management. Everything that concerns the children's education I leave to her, and should not think of interfering with her arrangements." This is all very well; but these good people forget to ask themselves: Has any man, or any woman either, a right to abdicate the position which Almighty God has given him, and shirk its responsibilities? If God has made you the father of a family, are you at liberty to put off your responsibility on to the shoulders of *any* one, even of your wife? God has given to children fathers and mothers, that *both* may contribute, according to the powers which they each possess, to the proper training of their children.

People sometimes give themselves credit for great amiability of character for this sort of thing. They per-

suade themselves that they are generous and yielding, unwilling to press for their rights, and so forth: perhaps, however, if they were to take a deeper and more intelligent view of their conduct, they might come to think that it ought rather to be called weakness, and supineness, and neglect of duty.

Of course, I do not mean that parents must do the whole work of education themselves. They may, and ought, to get every possible assistance that their position will allow. In the nature of things they cannot, as a rule, undertake the whole; and they must find teachers to supply for what they are unable to do themselves. It does not, however, follow that they are to give up the responsibility which belongs to them. Whoever may assist in the education of the children, the parents themselves must always have a most important share, and without their co-operation the education will always be insufficient.

Education means a great deal more than mere knowledge and attainments; it means principles and habits of mind, cultivation of affections, and a good many more things, without which mere information is not sufficient.

There is a great part of this education which a child must receive from its parents. If they neglect their duty, and fail to do their part, it is probable that no one else will ever be able to supply the deficiency. There are many things which must be taught in infancy, and which can only be adequately taught by those who have the supreme and tender authority which parents possess by the law of nature.

For instance: the knowledge of God and of His love—the first ideas of religion and duty—the idea of the value of your soul—where are all these things to come from? They ought to come to you as little children; not in the form of Catechism—that comes after—but in the shape of ideas and feelings which take possession of a child's mind as soon as it is able to receive any impressions at all. It stands to reason that parents alone have the power of planting those first seeds, which ought afterwards to bear good fruit. It is easy to find teachers

who can inculcate the Christian doctrine as a lesson; but if the parents have allowed the early seed time to pass, there is not much hope of an abundant harvest. So it is with the practice of prayer, the habit of devotion and piety, the feeling that prayer is a great duty; who can inculcate these things with the same effect as a child's own parents, at the time when their least word should be all-powerful? You find some people who are quite contented to leave things like this to their teachers, or servants, or anybody else, rather than take any trouble with them themselves. Do you think that the children will not soon observe how little interest their parents take in such things?

Besides these duties to God, there are many other primary virtues which, as a rule, parents alone can effectually teach. People fancy that all these things come of themselves; but it is not so. It is true, of course, that there are virtuous and good dispositions in children, but there are other contrary dispositions as well. The object of education is to foster the good and eradicate the evil of human nature. It is necessary to teach children to be truthful, and honest, and diligent, and to practise many virtues from childhood. This has to be done by putting good before them, and explaining it carefully—by removing the perplexities of childhood, by fostering and encouraging the weak untrained mind in good, and firmly but gently repressing what is evil.

Take, for instance, the vice of lying; how often do people fall into this fault, because, as children, they were never taught or encouraged to speak the truth? Their parents never troubled themselves to put before them the beauty and excellence of truth, or encouraged them to speak it at all risks. It is naturally a difficult virtue for the weak and young, and it is for their parents to aid them, by precept and example, in acquiring it.

Very often parents actually lead or drive their children into lying. Sometimes this is done by violence of temper and over-severity, which frightens them into lying; sometimes it is by over-strained notions of truth-

fulness, or by being over-credulous. Some people will never believe that their children can tell lies, and, accordingly, never take the trouble to find out whether they are speaking truthfully or not; or, perhaps, through weakness, they fail to reprove or check them if they are untruthful. What is this but teaching them to lie?

It is the same thing with honesty. You find good fathers and mothers, sometimes, who are shocked at the bare possibility that their children could ever be dishonest. Plenty of other children are dishonest, they know only too well; but they cannot believe it of their own, as if their children were not exposed to the natural temptation to covetousness just as much as the rest of the world. The consequence of this delusion is, that, instead of being on their guard, and watching to check the first sign of such evil, they simply open the way to it by their carelessness, and, perhaps, by resolutely shutting their eyes to what all the rest of the world can see.

Another very important part of education consists in giving children good habits. If, for instance, you take no pains to teach your children to be diligent when young, do you not think they will feel the effects of it all their lives? If a child has grown up in habits of idleness—never taught to do anything—never expected to work, but allowed to spend his life in listless inactivity, he is not likely to turn out a hard-working, diligent man.

We often hear fathers and mothers making bitter complaints of their children—that they are idle, and will do no work for them; but it very often happens that this is the natural result of the foolish way in which they have brought them up. They never taught their children to work, or insisted upon their doing anything when they were young, and their trouble now is the just reward of their own neglect.

Education in first principles must begin from the beginning. Take an example from nature. The moment a child is born, its education begins, and every day it learns something. It learns to use its limbs and exercise its senses;

it learns to distinguish and compare objects, and to make the proper use of all the faculties and powers it possesses, and, by the time it has strength to make any important exertion of body or mind, the lesson is complete, and it begins life having thoroughly found out how to make use of its own powers.

Nature does not say, as some parents do : wait till the child has grown strong—it will be time enough then to begin its education ; on the contrary, it takes care that every waking hour shall be used in learning and practising things which it would afterwards find it very hard to master.

It would be a very good thing if all parents would follow this example, and begin the education of their children from infancy ; and if they would also imitate the gentle, tender, and patient way in which nature teaches. Nature does not give hard and formal lessons, but goes on unceasingly showing her pupils what they ought to do, and urging them to do it, so that they finish their schooling and learn their lesson from her without finding out that they have ever been at school at all.

I now come to another part of education. Many people find it very easy to get on with *quite* young children. As infants, they call forth all the instinctive tenderness which God has placed in the hearts of parents ; their childish ways are pleasing and attractive, and their parents can hardly make too much of them. By-and-bye, however, comes the time when they cease to be quite children, and are no longer playthings—the children are turning into boys and girls, with dispositions, characters, and thoughts of their own. Very often those same parents, who, a little while ago, were so tender and indulgent, so much given to fondling, now become harsh and distant with them. They will not take the trouble to understand their children's thoughts, and so are impatient of them, and find them troublesome.

This, however, is, in reality, one of the turning-points of life. A young mind is just coming into its inherit-

ance, and is bewildered by all the novelties which come in its way, and is ready to grasp at direction of some kind. If its parents are ready to come down to its level, and enter patiently into its difficulties—if they will think its thoughts and realize its position, so as to be able to direct and organize the new mental kingdom, and place the young sovereign on his throne in peace—if I may use such a comparison—they are working out the most important part of education. If, on the other hand, they are hasty and scornful, and close the avenues to confidence—or, at any rate, do not seek for confidence—they have neglected a great opportunity, and, perhaps, prevented their children from ever having that reverence for them and trust in them which they would have had if their parents had become their guides and companions as well as their masters.

There is one other part of education on which I must now speak, which needs very special comment, and that is *discipline*. You may teach your children what you like, but you will have done very little if you have not impressed upon them a correct and sufficient idea of discipline. “Embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way” (Ps. ii. 12). Discipline is the essential training of human nature, and all other learning is trifling as compared to it. The first principle of it is obedience—obedience to command, to begin with, and then obedience to law. If children, therefore, have not learned to obey, their education is worth very little.

It is the duty of parents, then, to teach discipline and obedience to their children; and not only to *teach*, but to *enforce*. For this purpose Almighty God has entrusted to them the *right*, and the *power*, and the *duty* of enforcing obedience—that is, of using whatever severity and compulsion may be necessary to enforce it. A very little force, a very little correction, is almost always sufficient; and it is generally the fault or folly of the parents if much severity is required; but control, and control *enforced*, in some way or other, is, in the nature of things, an essential element of discipline.

Parents, therefore, before God have no option—they are strictly bound to make a proper use of the power put into their hands, and, if they do not, they are responsible for the evils that follow.

It is a grievous error—an error only too common at the present day—to suppose that parents are not bound to punish their children—that they ought not to do so—that it is cruel, and a violation of the rights and dignity of the children, and so forth. This is an error founded on most un-Christian principles, and one which threatens to be most disastrous both to families and to society.

You find a great many parents now-a-days who seem to have no idea of exacting obedience from their children. They will coax their children, and argue with them, and even bribe them, and do everything except the one obvious thing, which is to compel them to obey, because it is their duty. What is this but confounding the very first lesson which a child ought to learn as to what obedience means? Obedience is doing what you are told, *because* you are told. If children do not learn to obey their parents—that first natural obedience which is suggested and rendered easy by nature itself—how is it likely that they will ever show much obedience to anyone else? How will they ever learn to obey men?—how will they learn to obey God? They may, perhaps, conform to the rules which they understand, and from which they see they cannot escape; but, as to the virtue of obedience, that is likely to be an unknown thing to them.

The chief difficulty of enforcing obedience arises from the selfishness and caprice of those who are charged with exercising authority. If parents are very stern and severe with their children out of selfish motives, because the faults which the children commit are troublesome to them, not because they are serious in themselves, they are no longer enforcing discipline, but are tyrants, using their power unjustly for their own ends.

Again, if parents correct their children without any sympathy—that is, without taking the pains to hear

them, or endeavouring to enter their feelings, and see things in their point of view, their strictness is not likely to be beneficial. They will then be led by their carelessness and want of sympathy into acts of injustice, which may do the greatest possible harm.

It is obvious, moreover, that discipline must not be capricious. If you are one thing to-day, and another to-morrow, if you are indulgent at one hour, and severe at another; or, again, to take a still worse form of caprice, if you are too kind to one child, and too harsh to another, your discipline can have no good effect, but will probably do harm.

The most common way in which parents make it difficult, if not impossible, for themselves to obtain the obedience of their children, is by putting off their training too long, and not enforcing obedience in proper time. If a gardener were to tell you that he meant to train a young plant in a particular direction, but that he intended to wait till it was an inch and a half thick, you would think him *very* foolish. You would tell him that it was obvious to common sense that, if he waited so long, he would never train his plant at all, or else would break it in doing so, or, at the best, that he would have to use great force to effect what he could now do with his finger and thumb. This, however, is precisely what a great many parents do. They allow the time to pass in which it would be perfectly easy to teach discipline: those years of childhood, when a word, or a touch, or even a look, would be enough to enforce obedience, if only they did their duty with firmness and common sense; and then they are very much surprised that their children cannot easily be taught to obey them when they have attained an age in which the will and passions have begun to assert themselves.

If children grow up with no idea of discipline—unruly, stubborn, and disobedient—it is a great misfortune to the children, and a source of unhappiness to their parents; but who is to blame?

Is it possible to find a more pitiable, and, at the same time, a more degrading spectacle than that of a mother

who is driven to complain that her children despise her, and will not attend to a word that she says? She complains that by the time they are eight, or nine, or ten, they have got past her control, and she can no longer have peace in her own house, because they are so disobedient and masterful. Who is to blame? She neglected her duty whilst it was easy, and now has to pay the penalty of her neglect. She has sown the wind, and must reap the whirlwind. It would be a good thing if this neglect of duty to their children brought nothing on the parents but sorrow and disgrace in this life; but who can tell what judgment the conduct of their children may hereafter bring on them? "I will raise up against Heli all the things I have spoken concerning his house: I will begin, and I will make an end. For I have foretold unto him that I will judge his house for ever for iniquity, because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them" (1 Kings iii. 13).

If I might conclude with a word of practical advice, I should say to all parents: Do not be afraid to punish your children if they deserve it: it is your duty, and they will love you none the less for performing it. Do not let your children become your masters, either by obstinacy or by fretfulness: how common a thing it is for children to get all they want if they will only cry for it long enough! Do not threaten what you do not mean to perform, or give commands if you do not intend to enforce them; and, finally, do not even allow your children to use rude or impertinent language to yourselves or others, but teach them, from the beginning, to treat with proper respect all who are older than themselves.

It is in vain for you to urge your children to be good if you are wicked yourselves. You must go before them, and show them the way, to use the Scripture simile, "as the eagle enticing her young to fly, and hovering over them," and then all your teaching will produce abundant fruit for you and for them: fruit for this life, and fruit for the life to come. Amen.

Catholic Sermons

BY THE REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XX.

Schools.

“They did not find the way of knowledge, therefore did they perish”
(Baruch iii. 27).

THERE are, my dear brethren, in this world, numbers of people who are wandering from the way of salvation, and in great danger of perishing, because they have never found the way of knowledge. If we ask what is the reason why so many go astray, we shall find, in a vast number of cases, that it is the result of a bad education. It is not always so, for the corruption of human nature, and the effects of free will, display themselves in spite of any education; yet it is true that a great many perish because they have been badly brought up.

It is a very sad thing to see the children of good and devout parents turning out badly, and becoming a disgrace and affliction to the Holy Church by their conduct. When this happens, we cannot but think that there must have been a fatal mistake somewhere in the way in which they were educated.

I have already spoken of early training and the inculcation of first principles. This is the foundation; but it is not enough. Parents are bound, if they are able, to give their children a complete education, to fit them for their state of life, that, as St. James says, “they may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing” (St. James i. 4).

Education is most important in itself, and important because those who are deficient in it are placed at a terrible disadvantage. If we want our children to hold their own with others of their age and station, it is absolutely necessary to take care that they are at least as well educated as their neighbours.

Parents are guilty of a very great injustice to their children if they do not give them all the reasonable opportunities in their power to gain the knowledge necessary to fit them for their state of life. If a father neglected his children, and gave them insufficient food, so that they never reached their full bodily strength and stature, all the world would cry shame on him; but this is just what he is doing, in another way, if he keeps his children from school, so that they are behind others of their own rank.

Your very first duty, in the education of your children, is to bring them up good Catholics. If you do not do this, then, indeed, you are the father, spoken of by our Lord, who, when his child asks for bread, gives him a stone; and, for a fish, gives him a serpent. It is quite clear that ignorance of the true faith, and of the means of salvation appointed by God, is a terrible misfortune. If you, by your carelessness, have involved your children in this misfortune, you have been guilty of a great act of injustice against them, and a great sin before God.

St. Paul says: "If a man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. v. 8). If a man neglects his own in such an important matter as this, he is worse than an infidel—he is a traitor to Almighty God. He is appointed to be the father, protector and guide of his children, expressly that he may teach them God's law; and if he does not do this, it is an act of treason against Him from whom his authority is derived. "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify to you this day, which you shall command your children to observe and to do, and to fulfil all that is written in this law. For they are not commanded you in vain, but that every one should live in them" (Deut. xxxii. 46); "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising" (Deut. vi. 6).

In words like these Almighty God commanded the

Jews to teach His law to their children. They were to consider the religion which He had taught them the greatest of all their treasures, and the one which it was most important to hand on to their offspring. That law, after all, was but a figure of the "good things to come," a type of that higher covenant and more perfect means of grace which God has given to us. The duty of teaching His law, which God imposed on them, must, therefore, be binding on Christians in a much stricter way. You may think that it is quite unnecessary to speak of the duty of educating children in the true faith, because it might be supposed *impossible* for Catholic parents to do otherwise. It is true that Catholic parents very seldom profess to bring their children up as anything but Catholics, but, unfortunately, they often do so; in fact, that is, they allow them to frequent Protestant schools, and to come under Protestant influences, so that they never really become Catholics.

There are two reasons or excuses for laxity of this kind. The first is a very poor one—that is, the hope of gain or worldly advantage, either for themselves or their children. The parents imagine that if they send their children to some particular school, they will be likely to get on better in the world. A Protestant school seems to them of a higher class, or "more respectable," and they think their children will be more thought of if they go there, and, perhaps, be better taught, and make more useful friends.

This is, indeed, a very paltry motive. It is clear that no worldly consideration, not to speak of the very small advantages which are to be obtained in this way, will, in any degree, make up to the children for tampering with their faith. It is, indeed, an insult to God to talk about worldly advantages on such occasions.

There is, however, another reason which sometimes induces parents to be more lax than they should be in insisting upon the Catholic education of their children. It is when, unfortunately, the parents differ in religion. In the present state of things, mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants cannot be avoided sometimes,

and from these, painful difficulties often arise as to the education of the children. Many fathers and mothers, who would be staunch and true to their principles in all other cases, allow themselves to be over-persuaded by considerations of kindness and affection. I must say a few words on this subject, although it is a difficult one to treat.

It seems, at first sight, very hard, my dear brethren, that the Church should insist, as it does, that all children of such marriages, both boys and girls, should be brought up Catholics. People sometimes say that this is a very arbitrary proceeding, and that, by making such a law, we ignore the rights of others, and disregard their consciences.

This, however, is not the case. Such marriages are only made on the supposition that the other party has no positive *objection* to the Catholic faith.

There are a great many people in this country who cannot indeed see their way to becoming Catholics, who, nevertheless, are tolerant of the Catholic faith. On any other supposition a mixed marriage would be something horrible. Nothing can be conceived, for instance, more repugnant to all Christian feeling, than that a woman should contract marriage, hating the religion of her husband, thinking it idolatry, and so forth. If she has such a conscientious objection as this, she clearly has no business to get married.

We have a perfect right to assume, then, that the Protestant husband or wife at the time of marriage knows what the claims of the Catholic Church are, and is, at any rate, tolerant of that claim, and it is on this supposition that the marriage is allowed. The Church, therefore, requires a distinct promise from the Protestant party to the wedding that all children shall be Catholics, not because she disregards the rights of the Protestant father or mother, or wishes them to go against the dictates of conscience, but because she takes it for granted that they have no strong objection to the Catholic faith, and see no difficulty in making the promises required.

If they cannot do so, then the marriage ought not to

go on, as it cannot be contracted without sin. When the promise has once been made and the marriage has been celebrated, it is clear that the husband or wife who has made the promise cannot retract it. They have given up their right as to the religious education of the children; and if they resume it, they are guilty of injustice to those husbands and wives who contracted marriage on the strength of their promises.

It is quite clear, also, that the Catholic party is bound to *insist* on the promises made at the time of marriage. In other matters, where principle is not concerned, it is very well to be yielding, and willing to give up your own way; but in a matter of duty like this, where the good of souls is concerned, you *cannot* relinquish your right. If you do, so it is, as I said before, an act of treachery against God and an injustice to your children.

Everyone who has paid any attention to the question must be aware that a Catholic cannot give way about the religion of his children without plainly going against the dictates of his conscience. On the other hand, it is *not* necessarily so with Protestants. A great many of them, in fact, have no sort of conscientious objection to allowing their children to be Catholics. Those who have such an objection ought not to marry Catholics.

Moreover, you must not be contented with making your children half Catholics. If you were to insist, for example, on their learning the Catholic Catechism, but did not take pains to see that they learned Catholic principles and ideas, and that their sympathies and feelings were Catholic, you would be making them half-Catholics. The consequences of such half measures are very disastrous to all concerned. Children brought up in this way may be Catholics in name, but too often are nothing at all in reality, and have lost all religious feeling in the cause of their half-hearted education. Men do not go by reason alone, or by catechisms and truths formally taught, but require the assistance of sympathies, feelings and associations in their religion, and if they are without these they are not very secure.

It is with a man's religion as it is with the mast of a

ship. No mast, however strong it may be in itself, will stand very long unless it is supported by the numberless small ropes which make up the rigging of the vessel. All these together help the spar to bear the strain of rough weather, and give it security in sudden tempest. So it is with the religious life of a Christian; he must have strong principles, good teaching and true faith, but besides these he stands in need of the religious associations and sympathies taught in childhood, and without these, the principles are in danger.

It is quite necessary, then, for parents in these circumstances to admit of no half measures with the children's religion; and, moreover, there must not be any delay about it. People sometimes delude themselves into thinking that the question will wait. "Why say anything about such an unpleasant subject whilst the children are so young?" This is a fatal mistake. Every year, I may say almost every day, adds to the difficulty. What could have been taught very easily a short time ago is, perhaps, a difficult matter now; and in a few years the evil will be done—an evil which you cannot repair, and which will very likely be a ground of remorse to you all the days of your life.

Parents have a very great power in the education of their children, but it is a power which must be used *at once*, or it slips out of their hands, and they struggle in vain to get it back again when once it has passed away. I cannot conclude this part of the subject without saying a word or two about the gentleness and consideration which are needed in the case of mixed marriages. You must do your duty; but you are bound, as carefully as possible, to avoid everything that can give offence or pain. You must carefully avoid anything which looks like insolence, or superciliousness, or an indifference to the feeling of others.

When difficulties arise between husband and wife in this matter, as well as in most other things, they do not generally come from the disagreeableness of the duty in itself so much as from the inconsistent, inconsiderate way in which it is done.

I now have to speak of school education. It very seldom happens that a sufficient and complete education can be given at home, so the choice of schools becomes a great consideration for most parents. It is, indeed, a serious anxiety, because a school is either the best, or the worst thing for a child. A good school is the greatest possible blessing that can be secured for children, and a really bad one is, without any doubt, the greatest misfortune.

First, let us consider the common case, in which it is necessary for parents to send their children to live away from home—to boarding schools. It is clear that it is their duty to take pains in choosing schools in which their children may be really well educated. The first thing is to ascertain that religion is properly and systematically taught. There are, unfortunately, a great many schools—even high-class schools—in which religious teaching is very imperfectly attended to. The teachers seem to think that adequate religious knowledge can be obtained without giving proper time and trouble to it; or else they say they cannot spare time from other studies. This is a great abuse and a mere pretence. As a rule, the schools in which religion is best taught, are the most successful in other things.

It is the duty of parents to assure themselves, as far as they can, of the character and fitness of the teachers to whom they entrust their children, and of the morality and discipline of the school to which they send them. When they have ascertained this, however, something yet remains to be done. If the teachers are to do their part for the education of your children, you must do yours; and this is a thing not sufficiently thought of. In the first place, you must be willing to pay a fair price. A great many of the difficulties of education arise from want of liberality on the part of parents. They want their children to be educated almost for nothing. In other matters people do not expect to get good things at very low prices; if you are buying food or wearing apparel for yourself, you are prepared to pay reasonably for it, and do not grudge your money; but a

great many people *do* grudge the proper price for their children's schooling; and, accordingly, many of our schools accept children at a charge which renders it impossible to provide good teaching.

Another very important thing for parents to remember, whilst their children are at school, is that they are bound to support the authority of those to whom they have entrusted their children. All the authority that any teacher has over his pupils is simply delegated by the parents; and, if the parents do not properly support the authority of their representatives, they are doing a great wrong, and rendering the education of their children impossible. You not unfrequently find parents appointing teachers over their children, but not willing to give them the necessary power to make their teaching successful. Is not this like telling them to make bricks without straw? Why do not these parents keep their children themselves and teach them, if they are able? It is quite clear that any attempt to teach without the requisite authority and power must be a failure.

Some parents are always ready to listen to every trifling grievance their children may have or profess to have, and by so doing effectually set the children against their teachers; or, again, they fail to treat the teachers with proper respect themselves, and so destroy the influence they ought to have in order to succeed in the task entrusted to them.

The great bulk of our children, however, do not go to boarding schools, but live at home, and only attend school for some hours every day. When this is the case, the conduct of the parents has the greatest possible effect on the education which the children receive. No teaching which is given in school can produce much good result, unless it is backed up by the co-operation of the parents at home. I must here speak of one of the difficulties which we have to encounter in this country. As Catholics are but a small body in most places, it is sometimes difficult for them to find schools of exactly the class they would wish. There is, perhaps, a deficiency, at present, of middle-class schools throughout the country.

Fathers and mothers have, therefore, in many cases, to choose between sending their children to schools which do not, in all respect, suit them, and sending them to Protestant schools, or schools where no religion at all is taught. There are a great many schools, at the present time, which, at first sight, seem to offer great temptation. In the Board Schools, for instance, everything is done on a very grand scale, quite regardless of expense, with a great show of liberality, which to many people is very attractive. It very often, therefore, is a question of choosing between pride and religion, and this choice is a great temptation to many people. It is plain that nothing but a case of *real* necessity can ever justify them in sending their children to schools where their own faith is not taught. Such cases of necessity do arise. When people are living at a distance from a Catholic school, they *must* send their children to some other school—because the law requires it, and they have no other means of providing education. In these cases they may trust to supplying the religious teaching of their children in some other way; but, ordinarily speaking, it is obvious that they have no right to expose their little ones to so great a danger of losing their faith.

If you send children to such schools, it is almost certain that they will never get a proper and sufficient knowledge of their religion. It is all very well for the parents to suppose that they can give the necessary instruction at home, or that the priest's instruction will be sufficient; but neither they themselves, nor the priest in such circumstance, can teach children effectually. The children, therefore, will leave school badly instructed in their religion—not only in the actual words and meaning of the Catechism, but in all those Catholic ideas which children insensibly pick up at a good school. Children who are educated in the schools I have been speaking of, will not only be ignorant of their own religion, but they will certainly learn a great deal of irreligion. That, unfortunately, is a thing very easily taught. They will learn it indirectly from their teachers, and, probably, directly enough from their companions. Our Lord says: "He

who is not with me is against me;" and every school which is not religious, is pretty sure to be irreligious in spirit; and every school which is not Catholic, is sure to be anti-Catholic in tone.

What right have parents to bring up their children without a proper knowledge of their own faith, and to expose them to the danger of irreligion, and of the immorality which is tolerably sure to follow from it, simply to gratify their own pride? It is, indeed, a very poor sort of pride, and one which Catholics of all classes and stations should join in reprobating, because it is a serious injury, not only to the individual children who suffer, but to the religious interests of the whole Catholic body.

When there is a real and plain necessity for sending children to "undenominational" schools, it is then the duty of the parents to supply the religious education which is wanting. This must be done by regular, systematic teaching, and requires a great deal more time and trouble than people generally suppose.

I have now to mention some of the points to which parents must attend if they want their children to profit by their schooling.

The first is regularity. Our schools suffer terribly from the irregularity of the parents in sending their children to school. Sometimes they keep them away for all sorts of foolish reasons; sometimes they will send them to school after the proper school hours have begun. I suppose they do not understand the great injury done to their children, and to the school they attend, by this want of regularity. The very beginning of all education is discipline—learning that certain duties have to be done at certain times, and that they *must not* be omitted.

This is the first lesson the children should learn; only, unfortunately, their parents are teaching them exactly the contrary by keeping them away on every foolish pretence. Very soon the children learn to improve upon their father's and mother's teaching. The parents keep them away a good many days for their convenience, and the children soon stop away a good many more for

their own amusement, and so a habit of irregularity is established.

It often requires much self-denial and firmness on the part of the parents to send their children regularly to school, especially as they grow older. It seems very hard not to keep them at home when they can be useful and are wanted ; but you must remember that, if you do, your children will never receive their proper education.

It is very important for the welfare of the children that they should not be taken away from school too early. It is a great temptation to parents to remove their children if they see a chance of getting them into place, and so lightening their own burden. On the other hand, the last year, when children are old enough to understand what they are doing a little better, is often the most valuable time for their studies ; and if you deprive them of it, they will never get over the loss in after life. It is, moreover, very bad for the children to be sent to work too early before they are fit for it, and they are very likely to receive harm in body and soul from leaving school too soon.

I have already spoken of the part which parents must take in the education of their children by upholding the authority of those who have to teach them. This applies, of course, most of all, to the case of day-schools. It is impossible for any one to teach children if their parents are foolish enough to interfere. Some people have always got a grievance or complaint about the manner in which their children are treated at school : they pay attention to every foolish story they hear, and thereby encourage their children to tell tales about their teachers, and then they think themselves called upon to interfere. Such a line of conduct makes it impossible to educate children. It is sufficiently difficult, under any circumstances ; but if boys and girls are encouraged in their opposition to authority by their own parents, it becomes impossible.

Sensible people never interfere with their children at school—or, at any rate, never let it be *seen* that they interfere—unless in an extreme emergency ; but do their best to support authority. The result of this is that it

is easy to teach their children, and so they get the best education possible.

Of course, parents must always be on the look-out to see that their children are properly treated and taught, that the school suits them, and that they are tolerably happy there. All this, however, can be done without any appearance of interfering with the authority of the teacher, and without encouraging the children to make complaints and find grievances.

When school education is finished, there is only one thing remaining, and that is for parents to give their children a fair start in life. As I said before, the object of education is to fit young people to take their proper place in the world, and the parents ought to help them to find a suitable place. There is, however, one thing to be considered. It is very hard for parents to recognize that their children are growing up, and are no longer boys and girls. They sometimes, therefore, fail to see that these children, who were so absolutely under their command a few years ago, are now old enough to claim their rights as young men and women.

If parents are only wise enough to give to their children the consideration and liberty which their advancing age makes reasonable, they continue to have an influence over them in after life. If, however, they treat them as children too long, it is sure to end in discord and trouble.

And now, my dear brethren, I have said enough about the duties of parents in educating their children, and have, perhaps, gone into detail more than is usually done in sermons. The details differ in each family, but the principles are the same; and what I have said will apply, with very little change, to most families.

It only remains to say once more how very important the work of education is, for the good of society, and also for the happiness both of parents and children, since the Holy Scripture says: "A wise son maketh the father glad: but a foolish son is the sorrow of his mother" (Prov. x. 1).

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XXI.

Servants.

“The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister” (St. Matt. xx. 28).

OUR Blessed Lord, my dear brethren, came down upon earth “to seek and to save what had perished,” and to effect this He deigned to become the servant of men. He took the “form of a servant” and came amongst us, “not to do His own will,” but to spend His life in ministering to men. He began His life, therefore, in servitude in the Holy House of Nazareth, and spent many years in subjection. “And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them” (St. Luke ii. 51). His missionary life was one long servitude, in which He gave His time and His labour to men, and gave up His own will and His own ease to go after the lost sheep of the house of Israel. When the end of His course was at hand, He set up the same example of humility. “He riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments, and, having taken a towel, girded Himself. After that He putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of His disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded” (St. John xiii. 4).

In all this our Lord meant to set us an example, and, if possible, to reconcile us to that which must inevitably be our lot—and that is, to being servants. Nothing is harder for human nature than servitude, and from the beginning to the end men have struggled against it. “Of old times thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bands, and thou saidst: I will not serve” (Jer. ii. 20). Rebellion against authority and hatred of submission are the original sin of the human race, and it was to cure

this evil that our Lord embraced a life of servitude. It is in vain for men to try and escape from obedience, for, in the nature of things, it is the lot of the immense mass of mankind. How very few are *not* servants, in one shape or another! Sometimes in one way, and sometimes in another, all men have to serve. It may be as servants to one man, or it may be as servants to a great many masters; but in some way or other almost every human being has to be a servant. As the Holy Scripture tells us: "Great labour is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb unto the day of their burial into the mother of all . . . from him that sitteth on a glorious throne unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes" (Eccl. xl. 1).

It was to encourage us to bear with this lot, and to ennoble it for us, that our Lord assumed the form of a servant. His example points out to us that the service of God is the greatest honour which men can have. Slavery of itself is an evil and a disgrace to man, but everything done for God's service is honourable. If you are working for God, no matter how poor or how menial your work is, it is, nevertheless, the highest honour you can enjoy. If you are simply working for men, and giving up your will to them, waiting upon them, and doing their bidding, although they are no better than yourself, there is something ignominious in your work; but once make what you have to do, the service of your Creator, you turn all the fetters into gold, since to serve God is to reign.

It does not much matter what sort of master upon earth we serve—whether we are servants decked out in purple and fine linen, and dependent upon the will of a great many masters, as are many of the great people of the earth, or whether we serve one individual master—it is in either case a real servitude, and we must do the will of others, not our own. Our Lord, therefore, humbled Himself by becoming a servant, in order to show us how to turn our servitude into true liberty, by making it the service of God.

He came amongst us, moreover, to give us a motive for bearing patiently the labours and mortifications which obedience sometimes brings with it. We may consider ourselves as fellow-labourers with Jesus Christ, and always look on Him as working with us and sharing our toil. If we did this, even the hardest and most disagreeable service in the world would become easy, and the humblest position would be honourable in our eyes. We see examples of this in the joy with which the saints embraced the humblest and most revolting employments for the love of God. St. Vincent de Paul, for example, did not hesitate to go as a slave amongst the Moors for the redemption of those who had been taken prisoners by them, and considered all the hardships he had to endure most honourable, because he was doing it for the love of Christ and after His example.

The first kind of service of which I have to speak—though a few words will be enough—is the obedience we owe to the State. You cannot be a good Christian unless you are also a good member of society, and a good subject to the Queen. Nothing can be set down more clearly in the Holy Scripture than this. St. Paul says: “Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God, and those that are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist purchase to themselves damnation” (Rom. xiii. 1). Again, he tells St. Titus to “admonish them to be subject to princes and powers, to obey at a word, to be ready to every good work” (Tit. iii. 1). St. Peter says: “Be subject, therefore, to every human creature, for God’s sake; whether it be to the king, as excelling; or to governors, as sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of the good: for so is the will of God, that, by doing well, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 St. Peter ii. 13).

All power comes from God, and we are bound to obey the civil government under which we find ourselves placed, as a matter of conscience, because it is the will of God. “He that resisteth the power resisteth the

ordinance of God." Christians are obliged, therefore, to do their duty by the State—to avoid all open rebellion or secret conspiracy, and to take their fair share of the duties of good subjects. The Catechism tells us that it is sinful to belong to any secret society that plots against the Church or State, or to any society that, by reason of its secrecy, is condemned by the Church; and our Lord Himself gives us the same lesson in the words: "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's."

We must remember, moreover, that the government under which our Lord and the apostles lived were very hard and stern governments; their words, therefore, do not leave much excuse for those who are impatient and rebellious under every trifling cause of complaint.

I now go on to speak of service in its more ordinary acceptation—that is, of those who are commonly called servants, because they are engaged in domestic service. First, consider the importance of their state of life: it was from the beginning, before trades, or clerkships, or manufactures. It is a sort of employment which is the most natural of all, and comes from the very constitution of society. It, moreover, brings different ages and ranks of men together on terms of great intimacy.

It is very important to treat carefully of the duties of servants, because, as I have said, the great bulk of mankind are, in some sense or other, servants; and what I say will be applicable, in some degree, to most people; and, also, because the number of those who are engaged in service, properly so called, is immensely large. There are two sorts of duties, which belong to servants generally. These are duties to their employers, and duties to their fellow-servants: in these two duties are summed all the obligations belonging to their state of life.

To begin with, service implies subjection. It stands to reason that all the good qualities which a servant might have would be of no use without the subjection which is the very essence of his state of life. Subjection means something more than mere formal obedience. When we are told that our Lord went down to Nazareth with His

parents, and was *subject* to them, we understand that He put Himself under them, and humbled Himself, and chose to be dependent and submissive: all this is contained in the idea of subjection. Something of this kind—in a limited degree, and in reasonable things—is necessarily implied in the relation of master and servant. If you are not prepared honestly to give this submission and subjection for God's sake, you have no right to undertake the office of a servant. It is clearly part of the contract, not only that you are to obey certain formal commands, but that you are to be subject to those placed over you, and honestly to try to carry out their will in all lawful and reasonable things.

It is necessary to speak of this, because some seem to think that they are to serve indeed, but that they are to do it in their own way: that they have a right to judge what ought to be done, and when, and how, it should be done; and, in short, are constantly trying to make themselves masters instead of servants. They spend their lives in struggling to get their own way—in little things, at any rate—instead of honestly trying to do the will of those whom they pretend to serve. It is plain that this is quite contrary to the spirit and duty of their state.

It seems hard to speak of subjection, because the very idea of it is hateful to men at the present day; but the first element of peace is that men should clearly understand the principles and obligations of their state of life. The pride of human nature disposes us all to rebel against any such submission; but our Lord teaches us, both by precept and example, to love it, and to seek it as the safe way to peace. "Be ye, therefore, subject to every human creature for God's sake" (1 Peter ii. 13). "Being subject, one to another, in the fear of Christ" (Eph. v. 21).

Since our Lord and His saints *sought* after subjection, we ought, at least, to be able to bear it when it is the duty of our state.

Next to the primary duty of obedience, comes the duty of conscientiousness. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and

trembling, in the simplicity of your heart as to Christ: not serving to the eye, as it were, pleasing men, but doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. vi. 6). Conscientiousness is the one great thing that the world has a right to ask from all who profess to be Christians. Our very profession is that we are walking and acting in the presence of God, and referring our service to Him; if, then, we "serve to the eye," and do one thing when our superiors are looking, and another as soon as their backs are turned, the world may well scorn and despise us as hypocrites. If you can only keep in mind that your service is really service rendered to God, and that your subjection is for God's sake, and not for fear of men, then you will never "serve to the eye."

Conscientiousness is shown by diligence. If you are working to please God, and do your duty, you are pretty sure to do your best. Whatever you have to do, even if it is trifling and unimportant in itself, becomes important, and you do it as well as you can, if only you can bring yourself to look at it as something done for Almighty God. The great test of conscientiousness, however, of course, is honesty, and there are special reasons why those who are in service should be honest. They are bound to be honest by the ordinary rules of justice, as everybody else is, but they are specially bound, because their place is one of confidence. If you admit anyone into your house, you thereby place a trust in that person which is violated by any kind of dishonesty; and, therefore, you have a greater right to expect honesty from those in your own house than from strangers.

There are two sorts of dishonesty. One sort is when a servant appropriates, or makes away with, his master's property—that is plain enough; but there is another, which consists in waste of time. A great many good people never think of this, and have very little scruple in wasting the time of their employers. You are paid so much to give your work for so many hours; you take the money, and then give only *half* the time. What is that but dishonesty? Or, again, you are paid to do certain work in a house; you take the money, and you

don't do the work, or only do half of it. A great many people, who would be very scrupulous over a few pence, think very little of being dishonest in the employment of their time, and the fulfilment of their engagements.

There is a special reason for speaking about honesty, because, in the nature of things, servants are exposed to peculiar temptations. Their temptations are *little* things. Who can be expected to be so particular about trifles? And yet it is these very trifles which are the danger, because those who are not quite honest in small things, are almost sure by degrees to become dishonest in greater ones. It is very important for us all to be on our guard against dishonesty in trifling things, for the very reason that they look so insignificant, and are so dangerous; but this caution is specially necessary for those whose state of life puts them in the way of small temptations.

Servants are, beside, in common with a great many of other trades and professions, exposed to the danger of forming false consciences to themselves—that is, of persuading themselves, or half-persuading themselves, that wrong is right. They hear people call practices which really are dishonest, by all sorts of softening names, till at last they come to think there is no great harm in them, and so blind their own consciences. This is a great danger, and one against which the Psalmist prays when he says: “Incline not my heart to evil words to make excuses in sin” (Ps. cxl. 4). If people would preserve their integrity, they must learn always to call things by their right names: to call stealing, stealing; and dishonesty, dishonesty; and not be persuaded to call them by pleasanter names, because such is the custom of those around them.

It may be said that it is sometimes difficult to know exactly what is honest: to know, for instance, when certain *perquisites*, and so forth, are really allowable and sanctioned by custom. The best guide is the question: Would you like to be found out? If you would *not*, you may be pretty sure that you are doing wrong.

There is another point to which servants, who desire to do their duty conscientiously, must attend: they must

be careful of the characters of their employers. If you are admitted into any house as a servant, you are taken into confidence, and made acquainted with a number of things which other people know nothing about. This confidence is placed in you on the understanding that you will be faithful, and not talk about their affairs, and the little things that come under your notice in a way which would be disagreeable. If you tell tales, and gossip about all the private concerns of your employers, it is an abuse of the trust placed in you, and is a serious violation of the duty of your state of life.

Conscientiousness is to be shown, not only by honestly doing the work you have undertaken to do, but also by sincerity. It is difficult to be sincere and honest with those who are over us, and, at the same time, to show the respect that is due to them. Sometimes the temptation to insincerity comes in the shape of a disposition to flatter them, by agreeing in all their views, and encouraging them in all their faults.

The most common way, however, in which sincerity and uprightness are shown is by speaking the truth in spite of difficulties. Servants, more than most other people, are tempted to make excuses—to get out of small difficulties by telling little lies—or, rather, by telling lies about unimportant matters. This does not seem to some people as great a fault as it is. I shall have another opportunity of treating of the sin of lying in itself, but now I want to speak of it as it affects the particular state of life I am considering. Servants easily fall into the habit of making excuses: if they have neglected any work, they have some good reason to give why they couldn't do it—a good reason, only, unfortunately, not true: something has gone wrong, or some mischief has been done—it is the fault of some one else; and so they go on, never honestly admitting that they have been in fault, but always finding some little story or other, to get out of the difficulty.

What good have they done by all this? Of course, in a very short time, every one knows that they are not to be believed; so the only result of all their cleverness is

to destroy the confidence which ought to exist between them and their employers.

To render all other good qualities complete, you require charity and patience. People do not always recognize how necessary it is to have charity towards their employers. The relation of master and servant seems, at first sight, to bring with it a kind of natural opposition which is very unlike charity. This is, however, a very superficial feeling. The necessary effect of the Christian faith is to make us all brethren, and the little distinctions of class and employment disappear before the consideration that we are members of one body. For St. Paul tells us that: "As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another, and having different gifts according to the grace that is given to us" (Rom. xii. 4).

It will be well to give here some of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures on the duties of servants. We must remember that service then was a very different thing from what it is now. Then it was a harsh, compulsory slavery, in which masters had almost unlimited power over their servants; now it is an agreement entered into for mutual benefit, in which you undertake certain obligations by your own free will, and are bound to fulfil them as a matter of justice.

See how the apostles speak of the tie of brotherhood that unites master and servant, of the conscientious duty of obedience, and of the duty of mutual forbearance. What they say applies with much greater force at the present day, considering the sort of bond by which different classes are united in modern times.

St. Peter says: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy if, for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully" (1 St. Peter ii. 19). St. Paul again tells St. Titus to "exhort servants to be obedient to their masters, in all things pleasing, not gainsaying: not defrauding, but in all things showing good fidelity, that

they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (St. Titus ii. 9). To the Colossians St. Paul says the same thing: "Servants, obey, in all things, your masters according to the flesh, not serving to the eye as pleasing men, but in simplicity of heart, fearing God. Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that you shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance. Serve ye the Lord Christ, for he that doth wrong shall receive for that which he hath done wrongfully: and there is no respect of persons with God. Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a master in heaven" (Colos. iii. 22).

We have put before us very strongly in these texts the great principle which ennobles all obedience, and gives an adequate motive for perfect submission. It is the principle that in all that we do, if we do it properly, we are serving not men, but God. It would be a good thing, my dear brethren, if we all dwelt on these words. We all of us, as a rule, have to serve some one, and it is our wisdom and our duty to learn the spirit in which we should accept the yoke of obedience.

It is also important for servants to study their behaviour to their fellow-servants. We can do little in this life if we do not learn to get on with our equals and companions. It is common enough to find people who are excellent in their behaviour to those over them, but always have trouble with their equals.

The fact of being fellow-servants is a great bond of union, and ought to bring with it a feeling of kindness, and an anxiety to avoid anything harsh or likely to give pain. "And when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him a hundred pence, and, laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest. . . . Now, his fellow-servants, seeing what was done, were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done" (St. Matt. xviii. 29).

You see, my dear brethren, our Lord lays great stress on the circumstance that the wicked servant treated so

badly one who was his own fellow-servant, taking it for granted that every one would feel that this ought to be a strong reason for gentleness and forbearance.

To come more particularly to the customs of the present day, and the duties arising from them, I would point out how much of the happiness and welfare of servants depends upon the good or bad behaviour of those of their own class. In a large household the good or bad treatment of the young people depends much more upon the care and consideration of the upper servants than it does upon their employers. If the servants choose to be cruel and inconsiderate towards each other, and tyrants over the helpless, it is very difficult for their superiors to interfere; so that an immense field for doing good is open to those who wish to make good use of the influence their position gives them. A kind and considerate upper servant, with good principles, and a little zeal, can do good more effectively, in some respects, than any one else.

It just remains for me to say a word or two of the special dangers of the situation of life on which I have been dwelling. These are, to begin with, bad masters and bad fellow-servants—bad, that is, in being the occasions of sin. These sometimes constitute so great a danger, that any one who cares for his salvation may be obliged to leave a situation at once, and at any cost. When it appears that a household is irreligious or immoral, that there is danger to your faith, or that you cannot attend reasonably well to your religious duties, you should look on the situation as an occasion of sin, from which you ought to escape as soon as possible.

There is another danger to which domestic service is exposed—it is the danger of self-indulgence. There are a great many who work very hard, and lead self-denying lives; but it is impossible to look round without seeing that a great many suffer in body and soul from yielding to the temptations of idleness and self-indulgence. People excuse themselves in this, as in everything else: they are only following the usages of their class in eating and drinking, and doing what others do, and is expected of

them. This is all very well; but, in spite of all excuses, you cannot be over indulgent to yourself and lead an idle life, without very great danger of leading a wicked one, too.

I must conclude by one word of the great advantages of the state. As I said before, it was the great desire of the saints to carry out literally the teaching of the apostle, and be "obedient to every human creature for God's sake." They were anxious to obey on all occasions, because the more implicit their obedience, the better service it was to Almighty God. They looked upon obedience as the safest way to heaven: those who were obedient, they thought, are in no danger of being led away by self-love, and, therefore, they would become as little children in obeying, remembering always our Lord's words: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

So with you, my dear brethren; if God has placed you in a position of life where it is your duty to be obedient to others, to be subject, to give up your own will, you have, without effort, the very thing for which the saints longed. You are in a position in which everything you do can be made meritorious—in which all the common labours of life may be gilded, if I may say so, with the gold of obedience for Christ's sake. You are, besides, called to a state of life which affords abundant power of doing good—of doing good to yourselves by self-denial and devotion, and good to others by the many opportunities thrown in your way. The way of obedience is also emphatically the safe way, and the way of peace; and if you will only strive to see our Lord working with you, as He once worked in the house of Nazareth—if you will only realize that in all things you are working for Him, you will find nothing too hard or trying for you, but will acknowledge that His "yoke is sweet, and His burden light," and you will "find rest for your souls" (St. Matt. xi. 39).

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XXII.

Masters.

“If any man minister, let him do it as of the power which God administereth, that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ” (1 St. Pet. iv. 11).

ONE of the lessons which Our Lord teaches us most emphatically in the Gospel, is that we are all God's stewards. What is given to us in this world, is not our own, but belongs to our Master, and we have to take care of it for Him, as “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” This, my dear brethren, is a lesson which most men find it very hard to learn, and very disagreeable to carry out into practice. Our Lord, therefore, puts it before us in many shapes. He compares men to the husbandmen in charge of a vineyard: “There was a man, an householder, who planted a vineyard and made a hedge round about it; and dug in it a press and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen; and went into a strange country. And when the time of fruits drew nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits thereof” (St. Matt. xxi. 33). Again He tells us of the unjust steward: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said to him: how is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship: for now thou canst be steward no longer” (St. Luke xvi. 1). The vineyard let to the husbandmen, and the goods entrusted to the steward, are the different good things given by Almighty God to men. Health and strength of body and mind, talents and worldly position, wealth and all the influence it brings with it, and all the things that men enjoy and covet in

this life, are all things given by God—given for a time only—given for a particular purpose, and to be, some day or other, strictly accounted for.

Everything we possess is directly or indirectly the gift of God, since of ourselves we have absolutely nothing. "Who distinguisheth thee? or what hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv. 7). This is true, just as much of what men acquire for themselves, as of the advantages given to them without trouble.

Moreover, our possessions are not given to us for our own purposes, that we may please ourselves with them: they are given in order to carry out the will of Him who bestowed them. We hear people say: "May I not do as I like with my own?" Certainly, if you have anything which is really your own; but if all that you possess is *not* your own, but you are merely the steward appointed to take care of it, you may *not* do as you please with it, but you are strictly bound to employ it as you are directed.

What we have was entrusted to us, not on account of any merit of our own, but because such was God's pleasure. If you are stronger or cleverer than your neighbours, it is not because you had any right to be so distinguished, or could make yourself so: "Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?" "He made us and not we ourselves."

One of the greatest gifts bestowed upon men is authority over their brethren. There are few things which people covet more than power, and yet certainly there is nothing which brings with it a greater responsibility. It is a more serious charge to have power over men, than to have the disposal of any kind of material possession. It is a trust in which is involved an influence over the souls, the lives, the happiness of God's creatures, of your own brethren and equals in the sight of God. What a small thing in comparison is it to have power over material things—to have gold and silver at your disposal!

I am going, therefore, to-day to speak of the duties of masters towards their servants. A great many will doubtless say: "This does not concern me;" but this is not very often the case. We are almost, all of us, in some sense or other, servants, as I before said; but at the same time we are generally masters too, in one way or another. What has to be said on the subject does not merely affect great people who have troops of servants at their call, but concerns all who have authority over any one—and there are few amongst us who have not. It very often happens, indeed, that those whose authority is the least extensive have the most need to be careful in the exercise of it. In proportion as power is narrowed, it becomes absolute. If you have one or two people under your control, your power is often much more arbitrary and complete than if you had two or three hundred. Take the case of a despotic sovereign over a nation: he must, in the nature of things, let the great mass of his subjects alone; but an arbitrary and tyrannical master of a house destroys the happiness of every one in it.

It is quite as important, therefore, for those to whom power is entrusted on a small scale—no matter how small—to know how to use their authority over individuals, as it is for the great people of the earth to know how to rule the world.

It is a very pleasant thing to be honoured and obeyed by others, and to see them dependent upon our word, and we all like to receive titles of honour, and to be called "lord" and "master," and it is very difficult not to feel over-exalted by it.

The Acts of the Apostles tell us that King Herod one day "appeared before the people, arrayed in kingly apparel, and sat in the judgment-seat, and made an oration to them. And the people made acclamation, saying: It is the voice of a god, not a man. And forthwith an angel of the Lord struck him, because he had not given the honour to God" (Acts xii. 21).

We are, most of us, like King Herod in a small way, and apt to take glory to ourselves on account of the

deference paid to us by others, just as if the glory of it really belonged to us.

The first condition, then, for the proper use of authority is not to be carried away or made insolent by the possession of it. If we thought rightly, the very obedience and reverence shown to us by men ought to make us fearful and humble. Listen to the words of a man who was a great example of humility: "The centurion, making answer, said: Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed; for I am also a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it" (St. Matt. viii. 8). Here you see, my dear brethren, the centurion makes the very reverence and obedience shown to him a reason why he himself should be humble before his Master, and in the same manner, when you find people calling you master, and obeying you, it should be a perpetual reminder that "you also have a Master in heaven."

I must now proceed to consider what are the duties of masters to their servants. To begin with, I must observe that a great number of different relations of life are included in the term "master." You have landlords and their tenants, farmers and labourers, head officials and those under their control, manufacturers and their workmen, and then the largest class, the masters of households, and the men and women who are employed in and about their houses. All these come under the denomination of masters, because they are people "having authority," and have all, in a greater or less degree, the dangerous and responsible attribute of power over their fellow-creatures. All these different kinds of masters have, in some degree, the same position, and what has to be said of one set, applies, with a little modification, to all the others.

Whenever we exercise lawful authority—no matter of what kind—we are in the place of God, since "there is no power but from God, and those that are are ordained of

God " (Rom. i. 13) ; and all authority is to be exercised according to the words of my text, "as of the power that God administereth." We could not have any consideration more likely to have a sobering effect on the minds of all in authority, or one more likely to check the insolence of power, or the thoughtlessness which accompanies it, than the idea that we are using God's power, and acting in His name.

To use authority in a manner worthy of God, it is plain that it must be justly used. The first attribute of the Almighty is infinite justice, and a representative of God who is not just, is an abomination. I have before spoken of the virtue of justice, as being the foundation of all society, and yet as being a difficult virtue. Justice between master and servant is very often the most difficult kind of justice, because it brings into play the prejudice of class.

There is nothing which developes more strongly all the bad qualities of human nature, and which it is harder to overcome, than the feeling excited by differences of race, and differences of class. It is comparatively easy to understand and recognize the rights of people of your own race and country, and of your own class in society. The rights of others come home to you in this case, since your own rights and feelings are more or less concerned ; but when you have to consider what is just to people of, say, a different colour, speaking a strange language, or, in a lesser degree, to people in a different position of society, and placed in different circumstances, it is very difficult to enter into their feelings and acknowledge their rights.

You see instances of this every day. Take the example of slavery : how long a time it was before men could be got to feel what were the *rights* of the case. It was all very well to patronize, and to be kind to the black men, but people found it hard to admit that they had equal rights with their neighbours. The same thing we see in all social difficulties between workmen and their employers ; for instance, as a rule, neither party can see fairly what are the rights of their opponents, so

as to be quite just to them. It is necessary, therefore, in dealing with those who are not exactly in our own position—whether above or below us in station does not very much matter—that we should be on our guard against being misled by class feeling, and so made unjust.

Justice does not merely mean that you must do what you are compelled to do by the law. It is true, indeed, that the law of the land regulates the rights of property, and the social rights which each man possesses; but it does so only in general terms, and cannot touch individual cases. All human laws require to be interpreted by the rules of natural justice and Christian charity, and if you do not attend to these, you may do what is very unjust, although it is according to law. You may, for instance, take advantage of the weakness and necessities of the poor, so as to drive very hard bargains with them, and become their oppressors. We have only too many instances of this; for example, when landlords use the power which circumstances have given them, so that their tenants can hardly live, or manufacturers grind down their workmen, so that they become little better than slaves.

There is a law of the land, indeed, but there is another and a higher law, and that is, that men have a right to live. Neither landlords nor manufacturers, neither farmers nor tradesmen have a right to say to themselves: It is no concern of mine how my people live: all I have to do is to get what I can out of them.

The first part of justice to your servants is to pay them their wages honestly and promptly. This is a matter of strict justice: "Thou shalt not refuse the hire of the needy, and the poor; but thou shalt pay him the price of his labour the same day, before the going down of the sun, because he is poor, and with it maintaineth his life, lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be reputed to thee for a sin" (Deut. xxiv. 14).

Defrauding labourers of their wages is spoken of in the Holy Scriptures as one of the sins specially crying to heaven for vengeance. St. James says: "Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields,

which has by fraud been kept back by you, crieth : and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath" (St. James v. 4).

At the present day there is no great fear that people will defraud their servants on any large scale, but small injustices of this kind are often practised against those who cannot protect themselves.

There are a great many kinds of injustice which are in the power of masters and employers. These consist in many other things besides keeping back money : injustice is often committed by doing an injury to the character of those under their charge. Masters, for instance, are often very unjust in refusing characters to their servants without reasonable cause.

This is sometimes done through anger as a kind of vengeance. There has been a disagreement, and perhaps angry words have passed, and then the employer takes advantage of his power to injure those who have offended him, by refusing to give any character, and so, perhaps, depriving them of the means of livelihood. He is not obliged by law to give a character, and therefore refuses, or gives it in such a way as to make it useless. Again, some people refuse to give characters to their servants, to save themselves trouble : they think that if they commit themselves to any character, they may have to write letters, or answer questions, and do other things which will be troublesome—so they refuse to give any character.

This is manifestly an injustice, since any one who has been your servant has clearly a right to ask for a character on leaving your service, and you are bound to say all that you reasonably and truthfully can say in his favour.

Besides being strictly just to your servants, you must be considerate ; that is, you must not ask of them more labour than is reasonable. There are some employers who do not seem to care how many hours a day they keep their servants at work, or how much labour they impose upon them. We used to hear terrible stories of the hardships to which workmen in factories, and not

only men, but women and children, were exposed—of the long hours they were expected to work, till body and mind were worn out with toil. A good deal of this has been prevented by law, but still a good deal of it remains.

If we are considerate, we shall always remember that our servants and workmen are of just the same flesh and blood as ourselves; that they feel fatigue and exhaustion as we do, and have the same need of rest and recreation. We all know that this is the case, and yet there are a great many people who never think of sparing their servants unnecessary fatigue and trouble; to gratify their own whims, for instance, they do not care how long their servants are kept up at night, or what strain of work is thrown upon them.

There is another part of considerateness which requires special mention—that is, considerateness of speech. When we have power over others, we can speak without fear of being contradicted, and the abuse of this power is one of the great temptations of wealth. If you have been brought up surrounded by all the good things of this world, it is very hard not to become overbearing and insolent to your inferiors. You see this sometimes in children. They have always been treated with respect by the servants, and never contradicted, and they are very apt to become rude and overbearing, and to fancy themselves superior beings, who may say and do any insolent things they please. Of course it is the fault of their parents if they grow up in this way. They ought to have been corrected and taught better things, and to have learned how very slight and artificial is the distinction between them and their inferiors; but their conduct illustrates the tone of mind of many who should know better. Grown-up people do not often venture to display their feelings so openly, but the same sort of thing shows itself sometimes in a very offensive manner.

You have a right to look for and exact proper respect and reverence from all under your authority, according to the law of nature and the usages of society; but, on the other hand, you must *pay* respect to your inferiors.

Every one of God's rational creatures has a claim to some reverence; all Christians, indeed, have a right to a very great reverence as being children of God and members of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Peter says: "Honour all men: love the brethren." You may be very rich, so that it may be worth men's while to bear patiently all that you may say or do; you may be very powerful, so that no one will venture to resist your behaviour, but that does not excuse you in the sight of God for failing to give to your brethren the respect which is their due.

It is necessary, therefore, to avoid all rude and insulting words to your inferiors, and not only words that are actually insulting, but unkind, disagreeable speeches, and cutting remarks which are likely to give pain. It is no excuse to say that you mean nothing by them—that it is only because you are irritable and out of temper; hard words are none the less painful because of the state of your temper.

This is true of all violent and contumelious language, but applies particularly to that which you use to your inferiors. When you are speaking to equals, who are able to retaliate if they like, your language is comparatively harmless, as they generally care very little about it; but when you use insulting language to those who are not in a position to protect themselves, your words become very painful and offensive. The very fact that you forget yourself so as to speak in such a manner, shows a contemptuous tone of feeling which is in itself very injurious.

You must be considerate to your servants, even when they are wrong, and you have cause to find fault. We are all a little inclined to be hard upon the deficiencies of those under us, and to expect from them a perfection we are very far from possessing ourselves. St. Paul says: "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1).

When we find fault with others, it is as well to think

of our own shortcomings. Our own faults are no reason why we should not blame others when it is our duty to do so, but are a very good reason why we should be considerate and patient with the offences of others.

It is not enough to consider the real wants and welfare of those under your care, but you must also be careful not to wound their feelings, or lower them in their own eyes, or those of others. As men are constituted, no amount of substantial kindness will altogether make up for the want of this sort of consideration: sometimes, indeed, favours conferred without any attention to the feelings of others have rather the air of insults.

I now come to the last of the duties which masters owe to their servants—whatever may be the kind of authority which they possess—and this duty is a proper care for their spiritual good. You have to care for them in two ways—by not giving them scandal, or putting them into occasions of sin, and by giving them proper opportunity and encouragement in the performance of their religious duties. Your obligation differs, of course, very much according to the sort of control which you possess, and the age and condition of those under your charge.

To begin with, you must take care not to lead them into evil, either by requiring any service which is wrong in itself, or by setting them a bad example. If you do wrong yourself, your responsibility is doubled when you have others dependent upon you. If by example, or, still more, by making them sharers in your sin, you lead them astray, you are using for their destruction the authority which God has given you for their edification; and if they perish, their souls will be required at your hands.

It is not enough to avoid giving bad example yourself—you must also see that it is not given by others. There are many good people who would never dream of giving even the least bad example themselves, but do not take any heed as to what goes on in their houses. They do not trouble themselves about the morality of their servants, but will engage servants without any care as to their character, and allow them to associate

with those who are innocent and inexperienced; or perhaps bring children into houses where the tone and manners of the servants are not those of a Christian household. We cannot doubt that God will hold them responsible for the evils that result from their carelessness.

Another part of the duty of employers is to see that their servants have reasonable time and opportunity for attending to their religious duties. They are bound to see that they have sufficient leisure to assist at Mass on Sundays, and that they have the opportunity of frequenting the Sacraments at proper times. I have before spoken of the fault committed by those who spend their Sunday in such a manner, that their servants cannot make it either a day of rest or a day of devotion; but it is not enough merely to give them an opportunity of doing their duty to Almighty God. You must encourage them to attend to their religion, and, if they are young people, at any rate, you must see that they avail themselves of the opportunities they have. It is not judicious to interfere too far, or too minutely, in such matters, with those who are of mature age; but if you have young people under your authority, it is clearly your duty to look after their religion.

To do this properly, it is necessary to take care that no work is put upon them which shall prevent them from attending properly to their duties. It is not enough if you merely give general directions: you must also see that these directions are, in fact, carried out. General orders are very often neglected in a large household, and work is often thrown upon the younger servants in such a manner as to make it very difficult for them to comply with their religious obligations. Besides giving them time and opportunity, it is your duty to see that they do not neglect their religious duties through carelessness.

You ought to insist upon regularity in attending Mass, and approaching the Sacraments at proper times: you must take care that they observe the laws of the Church about abstinence, and also, if necessary, see that they receive proper religious instruction.

You sometimes find people who will not engage

Catholic servants, in order to avoid the trouble of looking after them and providing for their religious necessities; but this is a very unworthy and cowardly way of escaping from responsibility, and must be looked on as a great injury to religion, and a serious neglect of the great means of doing good, which their position in life affords.

I should like to add a word here about the practice of family prayers, which is not so common as might be wished. There is nothing more beautiful, or more advantageous, than the practice of assembling the whole household—parents, children, and servants—morning and evening—to join in prayer together.

Family prayer, if carried out with regularity and devotion, is the best possible way of keeping up a Christian spirit in a household, and bringing down the blessing of God on all who are members of it.

I must conclude by repeating that what I have already said about the duties of masters does not concern only those who are great people with many dependents, but applies to all who have control over any of their fellow-creatures, however limited their charge may be. We are almost all masters, at one time or another, and we are generally very ambitious of power. If we thought, as we ought to do, of the great responsibility which belongs to authority over our fellow-creatures, and of the account we shall one day have to give of the power entrusted to us, we should not be so anxious to possess it. Our great anxiety ought to be to use the power which we have, not for our own gratification, but as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," that, when our Master comes to take an account of our stewardship, He may say to us: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many" (St. Matt. xxv. 21).

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON XXIII.

Anger.

"And God created man to His own image; to the image of God He created him" (Gen. i. 27).

IN these few words, my dear brethren, we have the origin of the dignity of the human race. This is the charter by which man assumes the proud position he holds on earth: he is the lord of this earth, because he is made after the image of his Creator. However many may be the weaknesses and failings of his nature: although, indeed, in many respects he is inferior to some of the brute creation around him, still he rules them all because he is made to the image of God.

It is this likeness to God, and the considerations which flow from it, which give such significance and importance to man, and all that concerns his welfare.

But for this, he would be as the beasts which perish: life and death, good and evil, and all the things which concern him would be of no importance except to each individual, and not very much to him: they would soon be over, and be as though they had never been. As it is, however, man's life, and what befalls him in the course of it, has an almost infinite importance, since his life is to be continued to all eternity after the image of his Creator.

I am led, my dear brethren, to this consideration by the subject I have to speak of to-day. The Fifth Commandment—"Thou shalt not kill"—treats of human life and its value, and of the crimes which destroy human life, and, moreover, of all those passions which lead to them.

To understand this subject properly, we must duly appreciate the value of human life, and the things which make it so precious. Man represents his Creator upon earth; and has been created for an eternity; and

his soul has been purchased, not by corruptible things as gold or silver, "but with the Precious Blood of Christ." Even human life, therefore, before God is of immense value, and of infinitely greater importance than any earthly goods. It does not matter how poor or contemptible the individual may be—whether he is good or bad—his life is sacred, since it was given by God, and all rights over it belong exclusively to God. God alone is the "master of life and death," and it is His special privilege to dispose of it according to His good pleasure: "I will kill and I will make to live: I will strike and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. xxxii. 39).

No man, of himself, has any right over the life of another, or over his own life; and, therefore, any one who takes away life commits a most grievous sin, by usurping the exclusive privilege and right of his Creator.

No consideration of anger, or of gain, or of political feeling will ever justify or excuse the crime of bloodshed, by which God is insulted, and society outraged, and a human soul hurried unprepared into judgment.

The crime of blood-guiltiness is one of those specially crying to God for vengeance. Listen to the words of the Holy Scripture: "And God said to him: What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth. Now, therefore, cursed shall thou be upon the earth, which hath opened her mouth and received the blood of thy brother at thy hand" (Gen. iv. 10); and again: "Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed; for man was made to the image of God" (Gen. ix. 6).

Almighty God delivered all creation into the hands of the human race; but the life of man He reserved for Himself. "And God blessed Noe and his sons; and He said to them: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth; and let the fear and dread of you be upon all the beasts of the earth, and upon the fowls of the air, and all that move upon the earth: all the fishes of the sea are delivered into your hand; and everything that moveth and liveth shall be meat for you: even as the

green herbs I have delivered them all to you: saving that the flesh with blood you shall not eat; for I will require the blood of your lives at the hand of every beast, and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man, and of his brother, I will require the life of man" (Gen. ix. 1.)

There can only be two justifications for taking away human life. The first of these is the right possessed by public authority. The right of life and death, which belongs to God alone, has been entrusted by Him to human society, although not to individuals; and, therefore, society, as represented by lawfully constituted authority, has the right to take away human life for its own protection.

This may be either in a just war—in which men are called upon to fight for their country—or else in order to punish those crimes which threaten the welfare of society. Those, therefore, who take away life, as the instruments of a lawful authority, are, in reality, only carrying out the will of Him who is Master of life and death. St. Paul, speaking of public authority, says: "If thou do that which is evil, fear: for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. xiii. 4).

War, and the punishment of the wicked involving the sacrifice of human life, can, however, *only* be justified by a public authority, which represents the society of men; no private person can ever have the right to take life. The practice of duelling, which was once common in this country, and is still frequent enough in some places, is, therefore, nothing else but murder. It is nothing to the purpose that both of the parties fighting the duel are willing to risk their lives; they have no right either over the lives of their antagonists or their own. A man who fights a duel, therefore, in the sight of God is guilty of two crimes—he is guilty of murder, because he intends to take the life of his opponent if he can; and he is guilty of suicide, or self-murder, because he willingly allows another to attempt his life without any just cause.

The only other justification for taking human life is self-defence—that is, the defence of one's life, or of the life of a third person. You may defend your own life against attack; and, if you kill your assailant in so doing, you are without blame, and you may also defend your property; and if the thief is so pertinacious that your own life is in danger, then you may protect your own life at the cost of his.

There are many degrees of guilt in the shedding of blood. The greatest crime of all, which is held in abhorrence by God and by men, is the crime of murder. It is murder if a man takes the life of another unjustly, and quite wilfully, and with deliberation—that is, when he has sufficient time to think what he is doing—and by it he is guilty of the sin of Cain, and deserves and receives from God the curse of Cain. It is hardly necessary to say that it is always a mortal sin, and that no excuse of provocation, or of interest, or of supposed benefit to society can for a moment be received even as a palliation. “Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed.”

The next degree of guilt—which is only inferior to murder—is that which is called manslaughter, which also is an unjust and wilful shedding of blood, but is, in some degree, excused by want of deliberation. It is the act of a moment, done without time for sufficient reflection, and, therefore, *just* escapes the extreme guilt of murder.

Besides these two crimes, about which it is hardly necessary to speak, there are many kinds of homicide, which are not quite wilful, and, accordingly, differ very much in guilt.

If you are the cause of another's death by carelessness or negligence, it is clear that you are in some degree accountable. You had not indeed any intention of causing so great a misfortune, but still you knew you were running a risk by your carelessness—a risk which you had no right to run, and your guilt before God will be in proportion to the knowledge which you had of the danger.

I cannot conclude what I have to say about the crime of homicide without speaking of the indifference to infant life, which is very common at the present day. By the carelessness of mothers and of those in charge of infants, or sometimes, unfortunately, by design, a great number of little children perish, and it is the fashion of the day to make comparatively light of the crime. This clearly arises from a false view of the value of human life. We must remember that the life of the poorest and meanest human being upon earth, of the youngest infant, or of the infant not yet born into the world, is as much the gift of God, and His own exclusive possession, as that of the greatest of kings, and that every human soul alike is stamped with that image of God, on which all its real dignity consists.

I have said so much about homicide, because it is the direct object of the Fifth Commandment—"Thou shalt not kill"—although the crime of shedding blood happily does not require very much consideration in our own time and country.

The common things which concern us in the Fifth Commandment are the interior sins which sometimes, as their extreme result, lead to homicide, and which are of themselves hateful to God and injurious to man—namely, anger, hatred, and revenge. These are not of much consequence with men except for their external results, but God looks to the heart. Before Him, it is not the murder actually committed, which horrifies men, but the murder which is thought of, and consented to, in the heart, and all the evil passions which lead to it, which are the crime. Our Lord says: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man" (St. Matt. xv. 9).

The sins against the Fifth Commandment generally proceed from anger, and we will, therefore, consider what anger is, and how we are to guard against its evil influence. Anger is a certain swelling of the heart at provocation of some kind, which, if it is encouraged, sometimes bursts forth into a torrent of evil, carrying

everything before it. We must not, however, look upon it as a thing which is evil in itself; on the contrary, it has been planted by God in our hearts for good. "Be angry, and sin not" (Eph. iv. 26). Its object is to make us indignant with wrong, and to stir us up to resist evil; and, therefore, it is not wrong in itself, but because it is wrongly directed, and is not kept within bounds. The feeling of indignation, when rightly guided, becomes zeal for the cause of God, and for the defence of the weak. We can hardly fancy any one who is really in earnest, whose heart is not stirred within him when the cause of God is in question. "I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away, because they kept not Thy word" (Ps. cxviii. 158); and of Phineas in the Old Law the Almighty said: "Behold, I give him the peace of my covenant, and the covenant of the priesthood for ever shall be both to him and his seed, because he hath been zealous for his God"—and, indeed, our Lord Himself gives us the example of the holy zeal, when He drove the money changers from the temple: "And when He had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the temple, the sheep, also, and the oxen, and the money of the changers He poured out, and the tables He overthrew . . . and His disciples remembered that it was written, 'the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up'" (St. John ii. 15).

There are plenty of things with which we may be angry. Let us be angry with sin: let us stand up bravely for the cause of God and religion: let us know how to be stern, and even fierce, if necessary, against all who would lead us into temptation. Numbers of people are led astray because they do not know how to be angry, and to resist, at the right moment, in a sufficiently peremptory manner.

The misfortune is that our "zeal" is not directed to good, but is made to serve the purposes of our own self-love and pride. It is a slight injury or affront to ourselves, or a little jealousy or injured vanity that causes our hearts to swell within us, so that our indignation becomes not the "zeal of God," but the "anger of man."

Anger is generally sordid and selfish in its beginning, and is, moreover, intemperate in its course.

If, therefore, we would be "angry, and sin not," we have two things to attend to: we must take care that our anger is rightly directed, that it is for some good and righteous cause, and that it has in view not our own selfish ends, but the service of God; and, moreover, we must take care that we are not carried away by it. The moment any feeling, however good in itself, becomes our master instead of our servant, and carries us beyond control, it is always a great danger.

Every one knows the terrible effects of uncontrolled anger, and the evil it has worked amongst men, and the number of sins which every day arise from it. Notwithstanding this, however, we find people always trying to make excuses for themselves, and wishing to persuade themselves and others that it is not their fault.

They will tell you they have a naturally angry and irritable temper which they cannot control, and so forth. Now, it is just these excuses which prevent men from really doing their best, and instead of trying to amend their faults, they spend their time in making excuses for them, and persuading themselves that they cannot be helped.

You cannot help having an irritable temper, that is very certain; it is just like any other quality of body or mind given to you, but it does not follow that you cannot avoid sins of anger.

In this fault, as in many others, people continually mistake between temptation and sin. They say: "I felt very angry, and was very much out of temper, and very irritable." Perhaps so; but these things are not sins. It is no sin to feel cross or annoyed or irritable; the sin would be if you allowed your feelings of annoyance to lead you into saying or doing something which you ought not to do. It is no merit for a person to be very kind and moderate in language and behaviour, if he has no temptation to be otherwise; but for one who is filled with indignation and irritability, to speak and behave quietly and patiently is an act of almost heroic virtue.

This, my dear brethren, seems so obvious as not to be worth saying, but still I think you will often find good people who are much disturbed, because they have "felt cross," even if, all the while, they have done exactly what they thought it their duty to do. It is true, you ought not to act through passion; but, on the other hand, you are not to be deterred from doing your duty because you cannot avoid feelings of irritability from coming into your mind.

It is no excuse, therefore, to say that you are naturally irritable, because the very work that God has given you to do in this world is to overcome such evil dispositions, and He is always ready to give you the help necessary to do so.

The next excuse that men make is that their passion is very soon over. This is a very foolish excuse. Soon over! So is an earthquake or a hurricane; but the consequences continue long enough for all that. You hear people who seem almost to take a pride in their own tempers; that they are so hasty—that they are up in a moment, as if it were some rather remarkable peculiarity for which they were not accountable; whereas it is simply want of mental discipline. How came their temper to be so uncontrolled? Only because they never took the trouble to train it as they should have done.

So much for the passion of anger in itself; but I must now speak of some of the common ways in which it shows itself. It is hardly necessary to dwell on the terrible effects of uncontrolled passion; the world is full of them, and we everywhere see signs of the Scripture words: "Anger hath no mercy, nor fury when it breaketh forth" (Prov. xxvii. 4) in deeds of cruelty and violence which deface God's creation.

To come, however, to common life, and to what happens every day, let us see to what anger is likely to lead us if we do not keep it in check. Unrestrained anger naturally and almost necessarily leads to a quarrelsome temper—to that disposition of mind which is always finding some cause of complaint and indignation. Wherever he goes, whatever company he frequents, a

quarrelsome man finds something to fight with. Everywhere he meets with offence, and he passes his life in injuring and receiving injury, in paining others and being made wretched himself. Such a man violates charity every hour, and at last, perhaps, commits some frightful deed, which is never to be forgotten. What is the reason of all this? Is society in league against him? No; but he has never learned to control his temper; and provocations, which to others are of no consequence, become serious matters with him, and call forth the full torrent of his indignation. What can be a greater misfortune to a man? What can warn us more effectually of the necessity of controlling the passion of anger than the sight of a really passionate and quarrelsome man?

Sometimes this quarrelsome temper is confined to little things, and then becomes peevishness. A little thing provokes you, and, although your anger does not go to any very great length, it leads you to grumblings and complainings, and petty indignation at trifles. What is this but a quarrelsome temper on a small scale?

Quarrelling naturally results in injury to neighbours by words or deeds—sometimes by deeds which go very far on the road to murder. A great many murderers never meant blood when they struck the first blow, but passion and revenge grew as they yielded to them. More commonly, however, quarrelling leads only to injurious words, and these are bad enough. The tongue is a keen weapon, and those who use it easily forget how sharp it is, and the pain which it inflicts. A great many people think it a small matter to use contemptuous and abusive language to others in their anger; but our Lord tells us something different when He says: “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council, and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (St. Matt. v. 22).

The worst consequence of indulging in anger—that is, of allowing your anger to be violent, and frequent, and prolonged—is the sin of hatred, of which I must now speak.

St. John says: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself" (1 St. John iii. 15). No words could show us more clearly how hateful this sin is in the eyes of God. Hatred of our brethren cannot but be unpardonable in the sight of God, who is the very Spirit of Love, and before that Saviour whose will is to make us all brethren.

By hatred is meant that disposition of mind by which you exclude any one of your brethren from the fraternal charity you are bound to have for all men. You hate your brethren when you are determined to see no good in them, but seek out the evil that is to be found in them and dwell upon it, and rejoice in the evil. It is the exact opposite of charity, which "thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. xiii. 5). Hatred does not see evil to deplore it, and grieve over it, but exults in the evil and its consequences. The devil is a "murderer from the beginning," because he rejoices in evil, and desires evil for men, and he who hates his brethren is his disciple, and joins with the devil in desiring evil for them.

The sin of hatred, therefore, cuts a man off from God and associates him with God's enemy, and so long as any one indulges in the sin of hatred against any one of his brethren, he puts an impassable barrier between himself and his Creator—he cannot obtain pardon for his own sins, he cannot receive any of the sacraments worthily, or receive any grace from God.

Hatred is a sin which produces the most terrible effects upon the soul of him who indulges in it; it is a poison which turns all the good in his own disposition into evil; which distorts and corrupts his ideas of right and wrong, and makes him odious before God and man.

By hatred is meant something very much more than not "liking" a person. It may easily happen that you do not like people—that is, that you do not approve of their conduct, or do not find their company agreeable, and, therefore, would rather shun their society. Christian charity does not oblige you to *like* everyone in this

sense—indeed, it would be impossible. What we are bound to do is summed up in these words of the Catechism : we are bound “to wish well to all, and pray for all, and not willingly to allow ourselves any thoughts to the prejudice of any one.”

If, then, you would avoid the sin of hatred, you must compel yourself to wish well to all men. No matter how grievously any one may have offended you, or what reasons you may have for disliking him, you must always wish for his real good—good for body and soul, good for time and eternity—and you must be able sincerely to pray for him. There is no better test of real charity than to be able to pray for those who have offended you. If you can do this with real earnestness, it is quite plain that you are not indulging in hatred. To do this, however, you must lay aside all thoughts of vengeance, and all complacency in evil thoughts about them. If you are indulging in evil thoughts, and dwelling upon them, and rejoicing in the evil, then your prayers are a mere mockery.

It seems very hard—to some dispositions particularly—to subdue the hatred which arises from great provocation ; but we must learn to do it for Christ’s sake. Once bring yourself to think of those who have offended you, not as your enemies, but as members of Christ, and you will find it easy enough to wish them well. How can you be united to the head, and, at the same time, hate those who are his members ? Look upon them, also, as possible fellow-citizens of heaven. There is no one so wicked that he may not some day be united with us in the kingdom of God, when all that is now odious and sinful shall, by God’s grace, be purged away. If you could only fancy to yourself that your greatest enemy would be with you before the throne of God, would you not be ashamed of indulging in hatred towards him ?

Again, we must learn to look upon all sinners with compassion. Those whom we dislike most are either good people, who, whatever may be their faults, are the members of Christ, and actually in His grace, and then we must love them, because He loves them ; or else they are the lost sheep, for whom He is seeking with such

loving solicitude. Those who are wandering from God, and are really great sinners, are indeed most deserving of our pity, and any thought of personal and private dislike which we may have for them ought to be swallowed up in commiseration for the misfortune of those who have lost God, and are in danger of eternal destruction. If you were to see even your worst enemy, the one in all the world whom you were most disposed to hate, in danger of a terrible death, I think your dislike would be changed into pity. In the same way we ought to think of all sinners who are in danger of hell fire, however much they may have offended us personally.

The very best remedy against hatred is that which our Lord suggests, when He says: "Do good to them that hate you: pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (St. Matt. v. 44). If once you set yourself in earnest to do some good, however little, for those towards whom you feel the sensation of hatred, the very effort to overcome yourself will certainly turn all that hatred into Christian charity. I shall have to speak more in detail upon the forgiveness of injuries, because this forms so large a part of a Christian's duty. So I will now conclude by the thought with which I began, that every man is made after the image of God, and something of that Divine image is always to be found upon him whilst upon this earth, and it is our duty, under all circumstances, to respect the image of God, and never, by thought, word, or deed, to violate that image. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "He that violates the temple of God, him shall God destroy." However fallen and degraded any one man be, yet, in the eyes of faith, he carries about with him the stamp of the Divine image and something of the excellence of the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ by which he was redeemed.

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON XXIV.

Forgiveness of Injuries.

“Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls” (St. Matt. xi. 29).

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is our example in all things; He is the pattern and model of all classes of men—of priests and of laymen, of the old and of the young, of the king on his throne as well as of the peasant in his cottage. St. Peter says: “Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps” (1 Peter ii. 21). Why, then, let us ask, does our Lord, in so special a manner, call upon us to imitate Him in His meekness?—because “I am meek and humble of heart.” The reason seems to be that the virtue of meekness is, in a very particular way, a Christian virtue, and one which was always to be the especial badge of our Lord’s followers.

There are some virtues which the world admires exceedingly, though it does not imitate them. If you are just and upright in your dealings, and open-handed to your neighbours, and disinterested in your conduct, the world will praise you for what you do; but meekness is a virtue which, generally speaking, it does not understand, and holds in contempt. Those who are meek appear to men to be cowardly and poor-spirited, so that they frequently have to bear with much insolence and derision in return for the virtue which they are practising.

It is a very hard thing for those who live in the world, and are full of its spirit, to whom its approbation is like the breath of their nostrils, to practise a virtue so much opposed to the ideas of men, and for this reason our Lord puts His own example before us for our encouragement.

The virtue of meekness is most frequently shown in

the forgiveness of injuries; this, therefore, will be the principle subject of which I shall speak in this sermon.

Our Lord insists upon a forgiving spirit as necessary for all Christians, and He insists upon it as a thing absolutely essential for salvation. In one of His parables He tells us of the master who forgave an immense debt to one of his servants; and then how this same servant found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a hundred pence, and "laying hold of him he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest. And his fellow-servant, falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me and I will pay thee all; and he would not: but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt. Then his lord called him, and said to him: Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldest not thou, then, have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his lord, being angry, delivered him to the torturers, until he paid all the debt. So also shall my Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts" (St. Matt. xviii. 28). No words could express more strongly the absolute necessity of forgiving others, or put more plainly before us the reasons for doing so, "If you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts," you shall have no pardon from God.

It must, moreover, be a forgiveness, not only in word and outward appearance, but from the heart. The motives, too, are put before us: we are to forgive because we are all one family. "His fellow-servants were much grieved." We cannot indulge in a spirit of revenge without offending against that bond of love which unites Christians, and doing an injury to the whole body. Our own Master, moreover, has forgiven us a great debt, which we were quite unable to pay, and this not once, but a hundred times, and we are bound to show our sense of His kindness by forgiving our brethren.

Our Lord puts the same duty upon us in another way when He says: "If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and

then thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift" (St. Matt. v. 23).

God will not accept anything from your hands till you have made friends with your brother; you are to pause even in the act of offering your gift, in order to make up your quarrel, because God will receive no gift from one at enmity with his brethren.

There are two ways in which we are to practise the forgiveness of injuries. The first is by forgiving offences at the moment they are committed. When an injury is done, or an insult is offered to any one, his first idea is to inflict summary punishment upon the offender, and to retaliate by giving him all the pain in his power.

If we would follow the example of our Lord, we must learn to forgive, even at the moment when the injury is offered, and to bear wrongs patiently. "When He was reviled, He did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not" (1 Peter ii. 23).

Men are not always called upon to follow our Lord's example literally, but they should always act according to the spirit of it. In the ordinary society of men it is generally quite lawful to retaliate, and punish offences that are offered, because this is usually necessary for self-defence. You may defend yourself, and punish the aggressor within just limits—not in order to take revenge, but simply as a matter of precaution and self-preservation. If you did not do so, to some extent, it would be almost impossible to live amongst men, and to keep the position and the just rights which God has given you. What Christians have to learn, therefore, is to be forbearing and patient in their self-defence, and to do nothing in the spirit of hatred or malice.

It is in this kind of forgiveness that the virtue of meekness is principally shown, and it should be our great desire to learn that spirit which was heroically displayed by the Saints of God, and which is so dear to our Lord, and to carry it out in practice as far as possible; by so doing He tells us that we "shall find peace for our souls."

The other sort of forgiveness is shown in not "bearing malice," but being ready, when the injury is passed, to be reconciled to our offending brother. This is often a very difficult thing, but it is one which is absolutely essential.

To begin with, we must quite put aside all notion of revenge. It may sometimes be necessary to punish others, either for their good or for our own protection; but revenge is never lawful. "Revenge is mine, and I will repay in due time" (Deut. xxxii. 35). All vengeance belongs to God, and we must leave it to Him: "there is one that seeth and judgeth." If we think to avenge ourselves, we are taking upon us a part which belongs to Almighty God, and which He alone can execute justly. He alone knows the hearts of men, and what they really deserve; whereas the vengeance of man is tolerably sure to be unjust as well as presumptuous. It is not enough to put away the intention of revenge, we must also give up the desire of it, so far as with our hearts to wish for the good, and not the evil, of those who have offended. If you still continue to desire and long for vengeance, and delight over the evil which befalls the offender, it is a small thing that you have given up the idea of actually doing anything to him yourself.

You sometimes, however, hear people say of those who have wronged them, that "they leave them to God." This *may* be said with the best possible dispositions, but sometimes it seems rather like a curse—as if, though they professed to forgive, they were really praying for vengeance, and calling for God's punishments on their enemies. This is very far, indeed, from the spirit of our Lord's words, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that calumniate you" (St. Luke vi. 27).

We have to forgive our enemies without exception. There are a good many people who are tolerably forgiving in some things, but they have certain reserves, and will never bring themselves to pardon some particular offences. You hear people say, for example, "So and so has belied me, and that I will never forgive," and so forth.

This sort of forgiveness is not worth very much, since the very fact of making such reserves is a plain proof that you forgive in other cases, not for God's sake, but because you don't care much about the matter, or, perhaps, really have nothing to forgive.

We have, then, to give up all intention of revenging ourselves, and also all wish for vengeance, and we ought to do this completely. A great many people are ready to forgive in great things; they are willing to put away all serious desire of revenge, but they spoil it by taking little revenges for themselves. They cherish and store up a few hard or disagreeable things to say when occasion offers; they do not want revenge, but they just wish to make the transgressors feel what they have done by a few words, or some course of action which they propose to take. Is not this a trifling revenge?—a revenge of word, or tone, or manner, or something which takes away from the perfection of the forgiveness.

You often hear the expression, "I will forgive, but I can never forget." I suppose those who use this expression, very often do not think exactly what they mean by it. Of course, they are not expected to forget in the literal sense—and, indeed, any serious fault committed must, in the nature of things, change the estimation in which you hold your neighbour; but they generally mean more than this—they mean that they have some little reserve of vengeance and ill-will which they mean to treasure up and pay back again some day or other. When this is the case, your forgiveness is mere words, and really means nothing.

Our Lord is not even satisfied with this complete forgiveness, but He goes on to tell us to "overcome evil with good." St. Paul says: "Not revenging yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place unto wrath, for it is written: Revenge to me, I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat: if he thirst, give him to drink, for doing this thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good" (Rom. xix.); and St.

Peter says : " Not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing : for unto this you are called, that you may inherit a blessing " (1 Peter ii. 9).

This is a hard lesson, and there are few who practise it in its completeness. A great many partly forgive and do not seriously offend against charity, but there are but few who give themselves, and incline their hearts to carrying out our Lord's lesson in its fulness. If people did so, they would find that it was easier and more satisfactory to do it wholly, " than to do it in part, and that by doing it they would find rest for their souls."

To induce us to forgive our enemies, and to encourage us to make our forgiveness as complete as possible, our Lord has made the forgiveness of our sins depend strictly upon the way in which we forgive our neighbours. " Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Our Lord embodies this condition for the pardon of our sins in the prayer which He teaches us to say so often ; so that we may pronounce judgment upon ourselves if we are unforgiving.

It is a part of that general and most just lesson which our Lord teaches us when He says : " With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged : and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again " (St. Matt. vii. 2).

" For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God " (Rom. iii. 23). There is not one of us who does not feel that he will need the patience and forgiveness of His Creator when the time of trial comes ; and, therefore, we ought all to give that same measure of patience and forbearance which will be so necessary for us. Our only hope for ourselves is that God will forgive us, and that He will do so in the most unreserved, complete and indulgent manner possible ; let us, then, bestow on our neighbours the sort of forgiveness we hope one day to receive.

It does not come naturally to us, because man of his own nature is bitter and revengeful. We must, therefore, learn to forgive, and it is a supernatural virtue, to be acquired by prayer and by practice. We must

accustom ourselves to forgive, and to forgive easily—that is, not to make a difficulty about it. You double the value of your forgiveness if you forgive at once, and forgive heartily and cheerfully. We must take care to have no reserves, but as we propose to forgive, not out of personal feeling, but for God's sake, we must be ready to forgive all things, to all persons.

It is a poor thing to say you forgive, and yet secretly to bear malice all the time, so as to be ready to renew your quarrel and take up your old grievance again on the first opportunity. When people forgive in this manner, they are a little like Ananias, who offered to God his money, but kept back a part. St. Peter said to him : “ Whilst your land remained, did it not remain to thee ? and when it was sold, was it not in thy power ? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart ? ” (Acts v. 4.) Let us not pretend to forgive, for God's sake, unless we are prepared to give our enmity thoroughly and without any reserve.

Finally, we must be ready to forgive again and again. St. Peter once asked our Lord : “ Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me and I forgive him ?—till seven times ? Jesus saith unto him : I say not to thee till seven times ; but till seventy times seven times ” (St. Matt. xviii. 21).

We think a great deal of it if any one commits a fault against us a second and a third time ; but we think very little about it if we sin against God again and again, till our offences, to use the words of the Psalmist, “ are multiplied above the hairs of our heads.” If we make no difficulty in forgiving, even repeated offences, we provide for ourselves the best ground for hoping for the pardon of our own many relapses into sin.

There are a great many people who fancy that they would forgive any great injury done to them, as good Christians should, and yet are in the habit of indulging in resentments about trifles. Some one has spoken an unkind word of them, or affronted them in some way or another, or has, perhaps, failed to show them the attention they consider themselves entitled to, and they can-

not, or will not get over the slight, for a long time. They would not for the world really bear malice, but they do not think trifles of this kind important enough to call for the exercise of Christian virtue, and so they go on keeping up an ill-feeling, and, perhaps, some desire of small revenge on account of them.

You constantly find quarrels and bitterness kept up amongst good and religious people on account of very small things. If the offence had been more serious they would very likely have forgiven it, but they do not make it a matter of conscience, because it is so small. The great things, however, occur very seldom, and the little things very often, and we ought to accustom ourselves to be forgiving in trifles, if we hope to act as good Christians should in really difficult circumstances.

These little things, moreover, are not so trifling as they seem ; because, in reality, the peace of society depends much more upon them than it does upon the great things which happen but seldom. Small quarrels, moreover, give a great deal of scandal. When religious people are quarrelling about trifles, the enemies of religion exult ; they exaggerate the evil and compare our professions with our practice, and so find an opportunity for attacking our holy faith. There are, indeed, few things which are more likely to "give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," than bearing malice and being hard of forgiveness in trifles.

All sins of malice, hatred, and revenge, are abominable in the sight of God, because they are so completely opposed to the brotherly love which our Lord has established amongst us. I will, therefore, my dear brethren, conclude this subject by speaking of fraternal charity. It is not enough not to hate or bear malice or injure our neighbours. Our Lord asks for more : He asks us to *love* them. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (St. John viii. 35). I dare say you all know the story of St. John in his old age ; that he went on repeating in all his discourses : "My children, love one another," so often, that his disciples were weary,

and asked him why he kept on saying it. To this he answered : " It is precept of Christ, and if you do this it will be sufficient."

In this St. John was but carrying out the strong words which he had already written in his epistle, where he says : " We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren ;" and, " my dearest, if God hath so loved us, we ought also to love one another ;" and again, " If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not ?" (1 St. John iii.—iv.)

St. Paul also says : " Owe no man anything but to love one another : for he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. xiii. 8).

In the great stress which the apostles lay upon the duty of fraternal charity, they are but following our Lord's own words. When He describes the last judgment, He speaks simply of kindness to our neighbours and works of mercy : " I was hungry, and you gave me to eat ; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink," as if our salvation depended upon these things only. It is not that a great many more things are not necessary, or that our Lord and His apostles meant to pass them over, but because those who have a real and genuine charity to their neighbours, can hardly fail, at the same time, to have all the other qualities necessary to please God. " The love of our neighbour worketh no evil : love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10).

Now, my dear brethren, let us consider what are the qualities of this love, that we may not be carried away by mere words, and think we have charity because we talk about it. By " loving our neighbours," we mean loving *all* men. If you love only your friends, or your countrymen, or pleasant people, whose society you like, it is not charity : " If you love them that love you, what reward shall you have ? do not even the publicans this ? (St. Mat. v. 46). It is a mere natural love which any pagan may have.

This is very clearly shown in the parable of the good Samaritan; in which our Lord answers the question: "Who is my neighbour?" Here our Blessed Saviour chooses for His example a Samaritan—one of those who hated the country and religion of the Jews, so much that they wouldn't speak to them. The man whom he found destitute and half dead, beaten, wounded, and covered with blood, is the example of what our Lord means by our neighbour.

Nothing can better explain that He does not mean only those whom we naturally like, but all men, however much they may differ from us in country or religion, in language or manners. Again, it points out that our charity is to be disinterested. If you love only rich and pleasant and respectable people, who may, one day, do you a good turn, your charity is not worth much. I dare say the wounded man would have found a great many friends if he had been well dressed, and had had plenty of money, but the difficulty was to find friends when he was stripped and half dead. Real charity, therefore—that is, loving our neighbour for God's sake—must include all men, however disagreeable and repugnant they may be to us by nature. This does not indeed interfere with the very special love which we ought to have for all who are our brethren as members of the Church: "Let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. vi. 10).

But this love is not to be spent in mere words. There are a good many people in this world to whom fine words are a snare, and they think they have done a great deal because they have talked about it. St. James warns us against this by saying, "If a brother or sister be naked, and want daily food, and one of you say to them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled, yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?" (St. James ii. 16).

Charity, therefore, must show itself by something substantial: by giving your money, or giving your time; by taking trouble, or by enduring annoyance, and practising self-restraint. If you find that it does not show itself

in any of these ways, you may generally look upon it as not existing.

Our Lord gives us a description of the love we ought to have for others in the words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Our love for ourselves certainly does not spend itself in words, but, on the contrary, is ever on the watch for the least opportunity of securing an advantage or a pleasure for ourselves. If we had the love for our neighbours which we ought to have, therefore we should have a little of that ingenuity in contriving, and patience in carrying out what is for their good, which we find when it is a question of our own welfare.

The spirit, moreover, in which we do things for others ought to resemble the spirit with which we work for ourselves. Here, again, the parable of the good Samaritan helps us. "He bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine" (St. Luke x. 34). By the wine we may very well understand real substantial help, and by the oil, that other kind of help which is nearly as important—the help which consists in kindness and compassion, in gentleness of manner and considerateness of speech.

We never stint either the oil or the wine with ourselves, but we take abundant care not only to provide substantial good things, but also everything which can be pleasant to our feelings; and we are sufficiently cautious to avoid even the least thing likely, in any way, to hurt us. With our brethren, however, we very often leave out the oil; the good is done, but the kindness omitted. A great many people do much good for others, but they do it in a hard, dry, stern fashion. If they help those who are in trouble, it is in a harsh, unfeeling way; if they give money to the poor, it is in an arrogant manner, and, perhaps, with contemptuous words. What is this but leaving out the oil? Good deeds done in this way are deprived of half their value, because they are not the fruit of the charity by which we love our neighbour as ourselves.

Again, the same principle will make us patient with others, with something of that patience which we show to ourselves. We see our own faults, clearly enough,

and often are very much ashamed of them and disgusted by them, but we are very kind to ourselves, notwithstanding. So let it be with our neighbours; we cannot help seeing their faults, and, if need be, reprobating them; but let us be kind and patient with them in spite of their faults, and not be in too great a hurry to cast them off because they are not all that might be wished.

The love of our neighbour is to be not mere natural benevolence, but something more: it is to be a real love given for God's sake. We ought, indeed, to cultivate the natural feelings which God has put into the hearts of men—tenderness of heart, sympathy with suffering, and dislike of giving pain, desire of making others happy, and so forth; but we must add to this a supernatural love to all men, because they are the creatures of God and redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ.

If we want to have this love in perfection, we have an easy way to acquire it. Always see Christ in His poor; see Him in every human being who is afflicted and in pain—in the hungry and the sick, and in every one who needs your assistance. This is just what He himself tells you to do: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (St. Matt. xxv.)

If we can only bear this in mind in our dealings with others, we shall not fail in fraternal charity. Everything we did for others would then be done in that patient, loving and respectful spirit which is the mark of that true charity by which we love God above all things, and our brethren for His sake. Amen.

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XXV.

Scandal.

“The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hands” (Ezech. iii. 18).

THE term scandal, my dear brethren, is used in two quite different senses. It is very often employed to mean evil report, or words against the character of others; but, in religious books, it is the name given to all the sins by which we injure the souls of our neighbours. Any one who is the cause of the sins of others is like a man who puts a stumbling-block in their way, or, to use the expression of Holy Scripture, becomes “a stone of stumbling or a rock of offence” to them (Is. viii. 14), and is therefore said to give scandal. It is hard to exaggerate the enormity of this sin. If it is so terrible a sin to kill the body, what must it be to inflict mortal injury on the soul? “Fear not,” our Lord says, “those that kill the body, but rather him who can cast both body and soul into hell,” and the man who gives scandal may be the cause of the eternal loss of body and soul. It is true there may be time for repentance, and therefore his crime may not be irreparable, as it is with the death of the body; but, on the other hand, the evil of having cast even one soul into hell is a greater evil than any material death can ever be.

The man who gives scandal commits also the greatest possible injury against God—that is, he injures Almighty God in the only sense in which it is possible for Him to be injured, by depriving Him of the glory which belongs to Him, and of the love and service of His creatures. He, moreover, takes part with the devil, and helps him in his work, “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour” (St. Peter v. 8).

The man who gives scandal puts his prey within his reach, and helps him to carry out his wicked purpose. We cannot, then, be surprised when we hear the terrible words in which our Lord speaks of scandal : " It is impossible that scandals should not come, but wo to him through whom they come. It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones " (St. Luke xvii. 1).

If God will require the blood of a murdered man of his murderer, as he did of Cain, we cannot doubt that He will ask of you an account of the soul that has fallen into perdition by your means. " I will require his blood at your hands ; " this is what Almighty God says in my text, and it was said to those who merely failed to prevent their brother's fall ; much more strongly will the words apply to those who have actually caused the destruction of others.

It is plain, when we speak of the subject, that there are two sorts of scandal which must be distinguished—scandal in general, and scandal to individuals. A man may have no intention of tempting any one, and no idea that he is leading, or has led, any one into sin, and yet his whole life and behaviour may be such as to be a constant scandal and occasion of sin to the community at large. Such a person is like the Upas-tree, which spreads poison around : he makes everyone a little worse that comes in contact with him, and is perpetually lowering the tone of society.

There are a great many ways in which the general sort of scandal may be given ; you may scandalize others by your sentiments and opinions, or by the things that you do, or by what you leave undone. Many good people, for instance, give scandal by the views and opinions they express ; sometimes it may be by talking in an irreligious manner, or by taking up broad and what are called liberal ideas of things ; sometimes by being irreverent and rebellious in their tone of mind, or, at any rate, talking as if they were. Those who speak in this way, either publicly, or habitually in private, very often do so with-

out thinking much of the responsibility which attaches to them. They use such words, perhaps, out of levity and want of thought, and, it may be, out of a desire of notoriety, or to please men, and they do not remember that their sayings will very likely be repeated, and enlarged upon, if they hold an important position in life, and may do endless harm to souls.

The same applies to many other kinds of conversation. If you are habitually worldly and unprincipled in your ideas and ways of thinking, and are constantly spreading around you low views of religion and morals: if you "are of the world, and therefore of the world you speak, you cannot doubt that you are perpetually giving scandal." St. John says, "Love not the world nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 St. John ii. 15). Those Christians whose sentiments and feelings are those of the world, and who, by word and example, are propagating and encouraging the ideas of the world, cannot fail to be to their neighbours the "odour of death unto death."

I dwell upon this because, in these days of freedom of speech, we are a little apt to forget the responsibility which we have for our words, the sentiments we express, and the opinions we give. It is to no purpose that we say we never meant to do harm—that we never reflected on the injury they would do to others; that is our own fault; we are responsible in the sight of God for all the harm which we might have known, and ought to have known, was likely to be occasioned by our words.

The same applies still more to those who are leading immoral lives, or are living in the neglect of their duties to Almighty God. They may not, perhaps, be directly leading any particular person into sin, but they are giving scandal to the world at large, and helping to make those around them wicked.

All this may be done heedlessly; you may not actually perceive that you are leading anyone into sin, and you

may never know all the harm you have occasioned until the Day of Judgment. There is, however, another kind of scandal in which the harm is done more directly, in which people see the evil they are doing, and either intend the harm, and do it quite wilfully, or else are indifferent about it, and do not take the trouble to avoid it.

The worst kind of scandal is, of course, malicious or malignant scandal, that is, when people actually and deliberately try to lead others into sin. You hear of instances of men scheming and plotting against the innocence of others—endeavouring, for example, to lead some one else into sins of impurity or dishonesty. This is sometimes done out of a real desire of evil—because, like the devil, they hate good, and take pride in wickedness; and sometimes, again, it may be out of mere selfishness, to obtain some end or satisfaction of their own, and they do not care about the injury they inflict on others.

Those who lead others into sin in this way, are guilty of two crimes—they share in the guilt of the sin actually committed, of which they were in a great measure the cause, and they are responsible for the injury done to the souls of their neighbours. The Catechism mentions nine ways in which we may share in the guilt of the sins of others: “by council, by command, by consent, by provocation, by praise and flattery, by concealment, by being a partner in the sin, by silence, by defending the ill done.”

These nine ways may be with advantage placed under a few headings. The first is the *suggestion* of sin; that is, if you teach people evil which they did not know before, or advise them to commit sin, and urge them on, either by precept or example, to do what they would otherwise never have thought of doing. The most direct suggestion is commanding—if you use your authority over others to make them do wrong, or urge them to commit sin by threats, or by over persuasion. The Jews became sharers in the sin of Pilate in this manner, when they cried out, “If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar’s friend;” they threatened him with the displeasure of the Emperor if he did not commit the wickedness on which they had set their hearts. There are a great

many ways of suggesting evil and leading others into it, and this applies specially to some kinds of sin. It may be done by example, or it may be done by wicked conversation, or perhaps by putting others in the way of finding evil in bad books or wicked company.

Those who suggest evil in any of these ways are undoubtedly the real causes of the sin, and those who are led away are their victims; *they* will perhaps perish, but God will ask their blood at the hands of those who were the causes of their fall.

You are also partaker in the sins of those who are your accomplices in any sinful act; you have not only your own share to account for, but you are responsible for the guilt of those who took part in your sin. This is true, even supposing these accomplices would very likely have sinned without your co-operation, but much more, of course, when, without your participation, the sin would never have been committed, as would be the case if you were the prime mover in the wicked action.

You participate in the sins of others not only by suggestion, but also *encouragement*; praise and flattery, concealment, and silence are not exactly the causes of sin, but they are encouragements in it. St. Paul, before his conversion, gives us an example of this, when he held the clothes of those who were stoning St. Stephen: "and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul" (Acts vii. 57). Those who lead bad lives themselves, even if they do not more directly co-operate in the sins of others, at any rate do so, to some extent, by the encouragement their example gives to sin.

So far, I have been speaking of the scandal given to others by what is distinctly wrong, either by suggesting or encouraging what is evil; but you may give scandal by doing what is right and lawful in itself. This may happen in two ways—first, when you are doing what is right in itself, but which must necessarily appear wrong to others who cannot be acquainted with the true circumstances of the case, and, consequently, may become an occasion of sin to them. You may not lawfully mis-

lead your neighbours in this way, and your action, though perfectly right in itself, would be sinful if you did not take pains to explain it so as to avoid scandal.

This may be well illustrated by the story of the holy old man Eleazar in the 2nd Book of Machabees.

In the persecution of Antiochus, he was commanded to eat swine's flesh on pain of death; "but they that stood by, being moved with wicked pity for the old friendship they had with the man, taking him aside, desired that flesh might be brought which it was lawful for him to eat, that he might make as if he had eaten of the flesh of the sacrifice: that by so doing he might be delivered from death: . . . but he answered without delay, according to the ordinances of the holy law, made by God, saying that he would rather be sent into the other world: for it doth not become our age, said he, to dissemble: whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar at the age of four score and ten years was gone over to the life of the heathens, and so they through my dissimulation, and for a little time of a corruptible life, should be deceived, and hereby I should bring a stain and a curse upon my old age: for though, for the present time, I should be delivered from the punishments of men, yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive nor dead" (2 Mach. vi. 21).

Rather than give scandal by eating the lawful food prepared for him, this holy old man was ready to sacrifice his life. In this case, however, the food was to be eaten distinctly as a sign of his abandoning his faith, so that, even independently of the scandal to his brethren, it would not have been lawful to take it.

It often enough happens that, for particular reasons, we are free from some of the obligations which bind Christians generally; there is a very sufficient reason why we cannot fast or abstain, or why we are obliged to do work on Sundays or holidays: the necessity is clear, and we have been lawfully dispensed, so that what we do is quite lawful and right. We are bound, however, to avoid doing it in such a way as to shock others, and make them careless of the laws of the

Church; that is, we must either exercise the privilege we have got in secret, or else take care, if circumstances admit of it, to explain how it happens that we are not observing the Church's regulations.

At the present day, however, there are so many people who have good grounds for dispensation, that it is not always necessary or desirable to explain your reasons for not observing the days of fasting and abstinence.

The other way in which scandal of this sort may be given, is when you are doing what is perfectly right, but others suppose it to be wrong on account of their ignorance and prejudice. This sort of scandal is called the "scandal of weak brethren." Here again we have an example in the Holy Scripture, and it is also in a case of eating meats sacrificed to idols, but under very different circumstances.

Many of the early Christians thought it sinful to eat the meat which had been used in the heathen sacrifices, which was afterwards sold as ordinary food. St. Paul considers the question, and decides that there is no harm in it: that the idol is nothing, and that the best thing to do was to eat whatever was put before them: "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles eat: asking no questions for conscience sake" (1 Cor. x. 25). He then goes on to consider the injury that might be done to those who might be led by example to eat this meat, although they considered it wicked to do so, and he says: "But take heed lest perhaps this your liberty become a stumbling-block to the weak. For, if a man see him that hath knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not his conscience, being weak, be emboldened to eat those things which are sacrificed to idols? And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? Now, when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I scandalize my brother" (1 Cor. viii. 9).

There are many things in which our Protestant neighbours have deeply-rooted prejudices, and, therefore,

we must be on our guard against giving this scandal to weak brethen. There are two things to avoid: we must avoid leading any of them into sin by making them act against the dictates of their own consciences, and we must take care, as far as possible, not to increase their prejudices against the Holy Church, by doing what they think to be wicked, even if we ourselves know it to be lawful. One special illustration of this is the observance of Sunday, as to which they have a great many groundless prejudices.

I should like here to say a word or two about the necessity of putting the Catholic faith before our neighbours in a fair and intelligible light. There is nothing about the faith that they would not understand if properly explained, even if they did not at once accept it; but there are some people who, instead of explaining things, seem to have a sort of pleasure in misleading their neighbours, and shocking them, by using words in unusual significations—that is, which Catholics at once understand, but Protestants do not—by exaggerated expressions, and so forth. This course of proceeding often gives serious scandal. We have no right to give up one “jot or tittle” of the true faith to please anyone, but also we have no right to make that faith a stumbling-block by the false light in which we put it.

There is another kind of scandal, which is improperly so called—because it is not really scandal at all—it is “Pharisaical scandal.” We read that the Scribes and Pharisees were constantly “scandalized” at our Lord’s words and actions; but it was not that He gave them scandal, but that they chose maliciously to *take* scandal at what they knew, or should have known, to be perfectly right. When this was the case our Lord disregarded their pretended scandal, and rebuked them for their hypocrisy. They found fault, for instance, with His disciples for eating the ears of corn as they went through the fields on the Sabbath day:—and again they found fault with Him for healing on the Sabbath day; but He did not stop curing the sick on this account. “The ruler of the synagogue, being angry that Jesus had

healed on the Sabbath, answering, said to the multitude, Six days there are wherein you ought to work. In them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. And the Lord answering him said : Ye hypocrites, doth not everyone of you on the Sabbath day loose his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead them to water ? and ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day ?" (St. Luke xiii. 14.)

There is a good deal of Pharisaical scandal at the present day, and a great many things are called scandal which do not deserve that name. When the enemies of the Church are looking out for things to say against it, as the Pharisees tried to ensnare Jesus in His speech, you need not be afraid of scandalizing them, and think that you ought to keep the doctrines of the Church in the background. On the contrary, you should follow our Lord's example, and speak out the truth boldly without regarding them. Again, people sometimes think that they are giving scandal if they attract the attention of men, or make them wonder, or make them laugh, and they not unfrequently omit duties which they ought to perform, "for fear of scandal," when really they mean only "out of human respect."

It is only scandal really if you are the cause of *sin* to some neighbour, or turn away some one from the true faith and worship of God, but not if you merely excite their ridicule.

Scandal may be given, however, not only by action, but by omission. If it is your duty to keep others out of sin, or to warn them of their obligations, and you fail to do so, you are as much responsible for their guilt as if you had *actually* led them into it. This is very clearly shown in the passage from which I took my text, which is God's warning to the Prophet Ezechiel : "If, when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, thou declare it not to him, nor speak to him, that he may be converted from his wicked way, and live : the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand. But if thou give warning to the wicked, and

he be not converted from his wickedness, and from his evil way : he indeed shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul " (Ezech. iii. 18). This text is a terrible warning to superiors, and one to which all parents, and master, and rulers of every description should give great attention.

Parents, for instance, have often to answer for the scandal they have given to their children, both by act and by omission. Unfortunately it happens not unfrequently that they are the direct cause of a great many of the sins of their children. If they fail to provide their children with proper and sufficient religious instruction, and the children fall into grievous sin because they have never been taught and warned as they should have been, do not the words of God to Ezechiel apply exactly ? They will " die in their iniquity, but I will require their blood at thy hands." Again, if parents are careless about keeping their children out of bad company, or, perhaps, even make them associate with bad companions, are they not responsible for the wickedness they learn ? Will not the parents share largely in the guilt of the sins of their children ?

The same applies still more to the very common case in which parents send their children into immoral and irreligious situations for the sake of gain, or, perhaps, out of sheer carelessness. Can we doubt that in such cases they will have to answer to God for their share of the consequences, and for a large share, too ?

I have already spoken of the responsibility which parents incur by not correcting the faults of their children with sufficient firmness. If the children grow up badly for want of a little vigilance, and want of moral courage on the part of the parents, who is to blame ?

Parents sometimes even give " scandal " to their children by more direct means—that is, they actually teach their children to sin by word and example. When parents, for instance, use bad language, and speak profane and unbecoming words in the presence of their own innocent children, are they not adding terribly to the

sin they commit by the scandal they are giving? Are they not, in fact, in the most direct manner, teaching their children to sin? So it is with a great many other vices—and, indeed, as a rule, if the children are very wicked, their sin is due to the scandal given by their parents. Well may our Blessed Lord say: "Woe to the world, because of scandals!"

What I have said of parents, applies also to school-masters and teachers of all kinds, and also, in some degree, to all who have authority over others. There is, of course, a special responsibility on all those who undertake the training of young people. If, as is sometimes the case, they look upon this office simply as a means of livelihood, and give very little trouble to the spiritual welfare of those under their charge, but allow them to be exposed to dangers and occasions of sin, which by proper care they might have avoided, they have only too good reason to fear the terrible judgments which our Lord pronounced against all those who scandalize the little ones who believe in Him.

It only remains for me now to say a word or two about good example. If it is a terrible thing to give scandal to your brethren and to give "occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," it is also a glorious thing to draw others to God by good example. Our Lord says: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (St. Mat. v. 15); and the prophet Daniel says: "they that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Dan. xii. 3).

These two great offices—that of giving glory to His name, and being instrumental in the salvation of others—God has left in the hands of men. It is wonderful, indeed, that He should have entrusted so much to us, but He has done so, and there is scarcely any one who cannot, if he will, do a great deal for the glory of God and the edification of his brethren. A man may be very poor and insignificant in the eyes of the world, he may have very little learning or capacity, but there is always some sphere where his influence is felt, in which he may

give glory to God and do good to men by his good example.

The princes and nobles of the earth; those with great wealth at their disposal; those with numbers under their control—what an immense power for good or for evil do they not possess! They may be the light and salvation and the chosen means of grace to those whom God has committed to their charge; or they may be their destruction.

The Holy Scripture tells us how King Jeroboam, to obtain his own selfish advantages, turned away the whole people of Israel from the worship of God to serve idols, and by doing so called down upon himself a curse and reproach beyond all others, as the one “who made Israel to sin.” If there is a special curse on those who “make Israel to sin,” there is also a special blessing on those who have been the way of salvation to their people; their names are in benediction, and, like David’s, a perpetual intercession with God for their brethren. The blessing is not confined to the great ones of the earth, but will be abundantly shared by parents, masters, civil magistrates, and all in authority, if only they will make use of their example and influence “unto edification, not unto destruction” (2 Cor. xviii. 10).

“Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps” (1 St. Pet. ii. 21), and all who are in authority are, in some sense, in His place, and should try to imitate Him in being an example to those under them, and in being made a “pattern of the flock from the heart” (2 St. Peter v. 3).

May our Lord, from whom all good example comes, and who alone gives the fruit of good example, teach us all how to make our “light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.” Amen.

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XXVI.

Purity.

“Lo ! the kingdom of God is within you” (St. Luke xvii. 21).

WHICHEVER way we look, my dear brethren, we see around us the kingdom of God. His kingdom, visible to us in external creation, everywhere displays new marvels of power and wisdom. “By Thy ordinance the day goes on, for all things serve Thee” (Ps. cxviii. 91). Science is constantly enlarging this kingdom, and telling of new realms which the imagination of man cannot grasp—realms of the almost infinitely vast and of the inconceivably minute; and when you turn to the regions of abstract thought, you again find new empires, vast and inaccessible, and unimaginable as those of the physical world. Everywhere we turn, there is the kingdom of God, and God is everywhere infinite and incomprehensible. “Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present” (Ps. cxxxviii. 7).

The words of my text tell us, however, that there is another kingdom of God, and that to us is the most important of all: it is the kingdom of God within us—the kingdom which He has established in our own hearts, in which He has made us His principal representatives and ministers, and in which principally we are to glorify Him. The kingdom of God within us is the most important of all, because all other things really affect us simply through our own hearts. We talk of external sins, but, in fact, all sins whatever, are internal sins and sins of the heart. All external actions are to us simply indifferent, except as far as they affect our hearts; and

actions are good or bad, and sins great and trifling according to the dispositions of the heart from which they come. Our Lord tells us this plainly when He says: "The things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man; for from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies: these are the things that defile a man" (St. Matt. xv. 18).

We are not in general sufficiently alive to the importance of sins of thought. The attention of men is, naturally enough, directed to the external consequences of sin, as that is the part which concerns them, and which, generally, strikes the imagination, and they do not trouble themselves very much about what it is that really constitutes sin. The very nature of sin is to be an *act*, but it is an act not of the body, but of the will, and the external action which follows afterwards, in reality, adds nothing to the grievousness of the sin, except in so far that it generally makes the act of the will more distinct and more energetic. You may, in a sense, compare the outward act, as far as the guilt is concerned, to the peal of thunder, which calls attention to the deadly flash, but does not add to its force. Since sin is the act of the will, it may be perfectly complete and grievous without going at all beyond a man's own mind. Supposing, for instance, that any suggestion of hatred and malice, or of impurity, be brought before the mind, and the will, instead of rejecting it, accepts and welcomes the idea, and makes it its own, knowing perfectly well that such an idea is hateful to God, and contrary to His law—then an act of the will has been made, which is a complete and distinct act of rebellion, and consequently a mortal sin; and this, though the idea has never got beyond your imagination and will.

Sins of thought are our most dangerous enemies, because they are so easily committed, inasmuch as they belong to the inward kingdoms of our hearts, in which we are undisputed masters, and where no one can resist us, and also because sins of thought are the fountains of

all the evil which men commit. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (St. Matt. xii. 34).

I have already been speaking of two classes of sin—that is, of the sins we commit directly against Almighty God, by neglecting our duties to Him, and of the sins we commit against Him, indirectly, by injuries done to our neighbours. I am brought by the subject of to-day to consider another class of sins, namely, sins against ourselves. Sins against ourselves are sins committed by the bad use of the powers and faculties of body or mind bestowed upon us. Bad use, means either not using them at all, and so letting them lie idle, or else turning them to an unlawful use, contrary to the ends for which they were intrusted to us, and so wasting them. "His lord answering, said to him: Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not, and gather where I have not strewed: thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my return I should have received my own with usury. Take ye away, therefore, the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents" (St. Matt. xxv. 24).

The special object of my discourse to-day, however, is one of that class of interior sins, the guilt of which consist in the *abuse* of the powers of body and mind which God has given to you. These sins do not necessarily inflict injury upon others. When they do so, of course a fresh element of evil is introduced, but the essential evil of them is the misapplication of the powers given to us, contrary to the will of Him that gave them.

The Sixth and the Ninth Commandments—"Thou shalt not commit adultery," and "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife"—are the two Commandments which prohibit all sins against purity; external sins, those of action and conversation, and also the inward sins of the heart and imagination. To use the words of the Catechism: "The Sixth Commandment forbids whatever is contrary to holy purity, in looks, words, or actions," and

“The Ninth Commandment forbids all wilful consent to impure thoughts and desires, and all wilful pleasure in the irregular motions of the flesh.”

In the sixth there are two things forbidden; one is the great injury sometimes occasioned to our neighbour by sins of this kind. Every wilful thought, word or deed, inconsistent with the rights of husbands and wives to the special and exclusive affection required by the marriage contract, is an act of injustice, and these thoughts, and all the occasions which lead to them, are strictly forbidden. Of these the apostle says: “The Lord is the avenger of all these things, as we have told you before, and have testified” (1 Thess. iv. 6). The other sin forbidden is unlawful self-indulgence, independently of its effects upon others.

This is a most important and most difficult subject, which requires the attention and consideration of all. (No human being, of whatever class he may be, can reasonably consider himself as safe from the attacks of the vice of impurity; no rank or station of life is so high as not to be exposed to temptation, and no profession so holy as to be beyond its reach. We carry the seeds of temptation with us, as part of our original corruption, and cannot escape from it in this mortal life.

History shows us that men of all ranks—the strongest and wisest, and even the holiest of men—have been attacked by the temptations to carnal sin, and sometimes have been shamefully overcome by them; and, therefore, if we rely on any exemption from the conflict for ourselves, we are but leaning on a broken reed. As if to convince us of the danger, St. Paul tells us, of himself, that “lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given to me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me, for which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me, and He said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity” (2 Cor. xii. 7).

These words assure us that we cannot look for freedom from temptations, but, at the same time, give us a great confidence that we need not fear them. The temptation

of itself can do us no harm; however vile or degrading it may appear to be, it is not any stain to the soul, so long as it is bravely resisted. We find many instances in the lives of the saints, of the holiest, both of men and women, who have been exposed to most violent assaults of this kind, and have been tormented by all sorts of horrible imaginations and suggestions, and yet at last have come out of the conflict uninjured, like the three children in the fiery furnace, so that "not a hair of their head had been singed, nor their garments altered, nor the smell of the fire had passed on them."

If, then, my dear brethren, you should be tempted in this manner, "think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you" (1 St. Peter iv. 12); but resist temptation boldly and promptly, remembering always that God's "grace is sufficient" for you, as it has been for others.

There is just one way of safety, and that is by fighting the good fight, and overcoming the enemy. People sometimes delude themselves by supposing that some other state of life would secure them from danger; if they were secluded from the world and its temptations, or if they were married; but married or single, secluded or in the world, there is no safety, except in bravely fighting and treading temptation under foot.

I must now speak a little more precisely about the sin of impurity, and for this purpose I dwell for a few moments on its dangers and miseries. In the first place, it differs from many other sins in this, that the smallness of the matter, or the insignificance of the object, does not afford any excuse. In most things actions which would be seriously wrong in important cases are trifling, because the matter in question is only trifling; but this is not so in sins of impurity; so that, if you consent to *any* temptation against purity, wilfully and deliberately, knowing what you are about, and fully meaning it, you are guilty of a mortal sin. This is very terrible to think of, but a little reflection will show it must be so.

The sin of impurity is, in a special and marvellous

degree, opposed to the sanctity and perfection of Almighty God, so that even the least taint of it is odious to Him, and it is, besides, of such a nature that it does not require quantity to produce all its effects. A little fire is just as good as a great deal for the purpose of burning down a house; once get the fire to catch, and it matters very little how great was the original blaze which did the mischief. If a spark of fire falls on you, you may shake it off before it has time to burn, but, if it does burn, you cannot make it trifling.

To use another comparison, the sin of impurity is like a poison. You sometimes hear of people dying by the bite of a poisonous serpent, and you marvel that death can follow from such a very slight prick as that of the serpent's tooth; but when you hear that the one drop of poison has corrupted the whole mass of blood in circulation, you are no longer astonished at the speedy death that has followed.

Such is the effect of the sin of impurity on the soul of man, and if, as the Holy Scripture tells us, we are to flee from all sin—"Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent; for, if thou comest near them, they will take hold of thee. The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men" (Eccles. xxi. 2)—with what haste should men escape from one so deadly as the sin of impurity!

Nothing can give a stronger idea of the rapidity with which such sins act than our Lord's own words: "I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (St. Matt. v. 28); and our Lord's words are only too well borne out by the facts of human life. History is full of examples, in which one glance, or one word, or one thought, has been the destruction of men, and carried them away to perdition.

You cannot, then, be surprised that there can be no half measures in dealing with a sin of this sort. Consenting wilfully and deliberately to any sin against purity involves in itself consequences unknown and unthought of: it is like consenting to slip down the

first few yards of a precipice ; it seems a little thing, but virtually means going to the bottom.

I compared the sin of impurity to the bite of a venomous snake which curdles the blood in the body, and so produces instant death ; it is like it in the rapidity with which it acts, and also in the sort of effect it produces. It is a kind of a sin which takes possession of the whole man, body and soul. No sooner has it entered in, than the mind and the heart, the understanding and the imagination, are full of it ; every faculty and power of the soul is absorbed and paralyzed by it, and there is no room for anything else. A sin like this lays waste the inward kingdom of the heart, blights and destroys everything good within it, and produces instead a crop of poison, in the shape of evil habits, which are sure to spread farther and farther, if not most vigorously rooted out.

This is no fancy picture, but is one seen but too often in real life. Multitudes of men have become the victims of this sin, and know to their cost how blighting and destructive have been its effects when once it has taken possession of the imagination and the heart. Those who are its victims are good neither for this world nor for the next ; they can neither pray, nor can they work, because all their faculties are engrossed by that sin to which they have surrendered themselves.

“ Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin unto death, or obedience unto justice” (Rom. vi. 16). Everyone who gives way to temptation finds that he has taken upon himself a yoke. It may seem light at first, but, by and bye, it becomes a very heavy and painful servitude—a servitude which is every day more galling to the conscience and more bitter to the heart.

“ What fruit, therefore, had you in those things of which you are now ashamed, for the end of them is death . . . for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. vi. 21). There is no sin which brings these words of the apostle more plainly before our eyes. In all sin the end is

death, but it is covered from our sight; but here, no sooner has the tempest of passion past, than the land is seen to be bare and scorched, and that *nothing* is left but bitterness and sometimes despair. It is, indeed, one of the frightful consequences of this sin that it makes its own abominations so conspicuous and painful, that it brings with it temptations to despair. It is so painful to bear the yoke of sin, and so hard to shake it off, that sometimes nothing but the special grace of God will prevent the victims of impurity from giving up all hope for this life and the next.

We cannot, then, be surprised, my dear brethren, at the care and vehemence with which all of us are warned to keep clear of this vice, and to avoid every danger of being contaminated by it. The great secret of avoiding sin is to keep out of danger. It is heroic to expose ourselves to some sorts of danger, but, in others, the only true heroism is to keep away as far as possible; so it is important to consider what are the dangers chiefly to be avoided.

They are two—the senses and the imagination—which are dangerous to different people according to their different temperaments and dispositions.

In the first place, a certain amount of watchfulness over the senses is absolutely necessary to all who would keep out of sin. The holy Patriarch Job says: “I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin: for what part should God from above have in me, and what inheritance the Almighty from on high” (Job xxxi. 1). The very fact of an effort of self-restraint is the greatest possible protection, because it puts the soul, as it were, in a posture of self-defence; whereas, on the contrary, the mere want of any kind of restraint invites attack. It is, moreover, foolish to pretend that you are trying to avoid sin, if you do not at least take some care to avoid what leads to it; you might as well pretend to be putting out a fire with one hand, whilst you were lighting it with the other.

It is necessary to avoid all those things which are our

own particular temptations ; there are some things which every good Christian is bound to keep clear of ; for instance, there are many sights which no one has a right to look at, and many kinds of conversation to which no one ought to listen ; but, besides this, there are some things dangerous to one person and not to another. We must, therefore, not only keep away from things which are dangerous to all, but take care also to avoid those things we know to be dangerous to ourselves personally.

The greatest of all dangers, of course, is that of bad company, because in it is generally included every kind of temptation, and we may almost say that those who willingly put themselves in what they know to be really dangerous company, have, as a rule, pretty well made up their minds to commit sin. "He that loveth the danger shall perish in it" (Eccles iii. 27).

Besides the temptations arising from the senses, there are dangers from the imagination. To many people the greatest of all dangers comes from the wanderings of the imagination, and the forbidden objects which it places before them. The imagination is indeed a most curious and powerful faculty, which creates a world for itself, and fills it sometimes with creatures which out-shine in brilliancy anything the existing world can produce, and very often its temptations are more difficult to resist than any other, and, at any rate, they are difficulties from which you cannot escape, since you carry some of them with you. To avoid the dangers of the imagination, two things are necessary. You must keep out of those things which will excite the imagination and give it dangerous food to feed on, such as bad books, or books which, without being actually bad, you know are dangerous to you personally ; and, moreover, you must resist bad thoughts at the beginning.

Our Lord teaches us to say : "Lead us not into temptation," although temptation must be our lot every day ; but, then, there are many stages of temptation, some of which we can avoid, although we cannot hope to escape from the others. Every temptation begins by

a mere suggestion or idea, which is quite external to the soul, and of itself cannot do it the least harm ; then comes the stage in which the mind suffers the temptation to remain, and allows itself to deliberate. If this state of deliberation is permitted to continue, the next stage comes very quickly, and the soul consents and accepts the temptation with complacency, and determines to commit the wickedness suggested. The nature of temptation was illustrated when our Lord was tempted in the desert. The devil came to Him and placed before Him a number of most wicked suggestions, but as our Lord could not for a moment hesitate in rejecting them, they were all purely external, and, of course, without the slightest stain of sin. When such suggestions are not purely external—that is, if you allow yourself to look the temptation in the face, and deliberate upon it before you make up your mind to reject it—there is always some danger, and some stain. St. Paul says : “ Let no temptation take hold of you but such as is human ” (1 Cor. x. 13). You cannot avoid being tempted, but you can prevent the temptation from *taking hold* of you, by not stopping to consider it, and by not allowing it, so to speak, to plead its cause, before you reject it.

Any kind of trifling with temptation is dangerous in all things, but especially in temptations against purity ; because if you once allow yourself to consider the temptation, you have almost let the thing go out of your own hands. The temptation will increase in violence so much that what could have been easily resisted becomes almost overwhelming. If you turn your mind resolutely away for a few minutes and compel it to think of something else, of business or amusement, you will conquer the bad thought ; but if you stop to consider about it, there is great fear that you will be led into sin.

You cannot be too careful, then, in promptly rejecting all evil thoughts, or in avoiding the things likely to lead to them, but you must not let care degenerate into scrupulosity. Scrupulous people make an occasion of

sin out of everything they see and hear, and all the ordinary occurrences of life, to which people in general pay no attention, become dangerous to their over-sensitiveness. In the same spirit, want of judgment is sometimes shown in attempting to secure young people from danger, by keeping them in an unnatural atmosphere of precaution. This is a mistake, and sometimes increases the dangers against which it is intended to guard.

You cannot keep any human being in ignorance of sin, and blind to all that is going on in the world around: "Otherwise you must needs go out of this world" (1 Cor. v. 10); and it is vain to suppose that innocence can be preserved simply by ignorance of evil. It is necessary, therefore, that people should be prepared to meet and encounter all the ordinary dangers of the world, and not to think to escape them by over-precaution. If you honestly and sincerely desire to do what is right, and to resist whatever is wrong, and do what you can to obtain the help of God in your conflict, you may safely encounter all the dangers which are legitimately and naturally thrown in your way.

I must conclude by dwelling on the love which God has for holy purity, since love and admiration for this virtue are the best preservatives against temptation. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord" (Ps. cxviii. 1). There is a great and distinguished honour in the sight of God to those who have preserved the grace of spotless purity, and, as St. James says, "have kept themselves unspotted from the world." St. John tells us of a glorious company, specially privileged in heaven: "And they sung, as it were, a new canticle before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients: and no man could say the canticle," and "these are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and the Lamb" (Apoc. xiv. 3).

Nothing can give us a higher idea of love of God for perfect sanctity than the care with which He provided for the perpetual virginity and spotless purity of

her whom He had chosen to be His Mother. She was preserved immaculate by a special intervention of His power, as the most striking proof which He could give to His creatures of His love for purity.

I have been speaking of the watchfulness and care we should use in avoiding temptation, and the courage we should display in fighting against it; but all this will be unavailing unless God helps us by His grace. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. cxxvi).

Solomon says in the Book of Wisdom: "As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom to know whose gift it was: I went to the Lord and besought Him" (Wisdom viii. 21). We, too, if we would preserve holy purity, must make it a matter of prayer.

If you keep up a spirit of prayer, and earnestly ask God to help you in your efforts to overcome temptation, you need not fear but that you will be victorious.

Finally, we must place the virtue of holy purity under the special patronage of our Blessed Lady; she is our patroness in all things, but especially in this most important matter. "I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope" (Eccles. xxiv. 24). She is the "woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Apoc. xii. 1), who has been given us by God to be the model of spotless purity to all classes—to men and to women, to the young and the old. She will obtain for all who invoke her aid the powerful grace of God by which they may be preserved from all dangers, and rescued from every fall. To her, then, let us commend ourselves and all that belong to us, that we may obtain all the virtues we need, but especially that of holy purity. *Vitam præsta puram, Iter para tutum, Ut videntes Jesum, Semper collætémur.* "Preserve our lives unstained, And guard us in our way, Until we come with thee, To joys that ne'er decay."

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON XXVII.

Dishonesty.

“Do not any unjust thing in judgment, in rule, in weight, or in measure. Let the balance be just, and the weight equal” (Lev. xix. 35).

I HAVE had occasion, my dear brethren, to speak of the virtue of justice, as being the virtue on which, to a great extent, the well-being of society depends. Justice, in its widest sense, is that virtue which leads us to respect *all* the rights of others, and to give to each one exactly what is his due, as St. Paul says: “Render, therefore, to all men their dues. Tribute to whom tribute is due: custom to whom custom: fear to whom fear: honour to whom honour” (Rom. xiii. 7).

There is, however, a particular branch of this virtue which relates exclusively to honesty in its ordinary meaning—that is, to the money dealings between men—and takes account of all the ways of wronging our neighbours in their property and possessions, and of all those things which can be estimated by the “rule,” “weight,” and “measure,” of which my text speaks. Everything that concerns this kind of justice comes under the Seventh Commandment, “Thou shalt not steal;” and it is on this subject that I shall treat to-day.

The very existence of human society depends upon honesty and fair dealing in money matters, so it is almost impossible to say too much about its importance. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof;” and “the earth He has given to the children of men,” the Psalmist tells us; and all the rights of property are by God’s appointment. The laws which regulate the possessions of individuals vary in different countries, and depend upon custom and the will of men, but the right to property has been given by God, as a thing necessary for the existence of human society.

There are two sorts of dishonesty, which we may, perhaps, call direct and indirect dishonesty. The Catechism tells us that "The Seventh Commandment forbids all unjust taking away or keeping what belongs to another"—this is the more direct way of violating the Commandment, because in this way we get possession of the property of another, and appropriate it to ourselves expressly in defiance of the will of the rightful owner; whereas, in other sorts of dishonesty, some kind of consent is generally given, though it has been fraudulently obtained.

"Unjust taking away" is either "robbery"—which generally implies open force, or violence of some kind—or else "theft," in which there is secrecy and stratagem. Open robbery contains the guilt of dishonesty, and something more—that is, the injury and insult offered to a neighbour by open violence.

It is hardly necessary to speak of the sin of theft, because all men are agreed about it; "for confusion and repentance is upon a thief" (Eccl. v. 17). The man who steals his neighbour's money cannot deceive himself, and has nothing to say. He knows that he has sinned against God, and incurred disgrace and severe punishment from men—punishment which is necessarily severe on account of the injury which his sin does to society. At first sight it seems very hard that trifling thefts should be so severely dealt with by the laws; but we must remember that it is punished, not only as an evil thing in itself, but because, if it were unpunished, it would make it impossible for men to live together in community.

All mankind unite in condemning theft, but a great many people make certain exceptions and excuses in their own case, and of these I must speak. To begin with, people are often fatally deceived by the smallness of the object of temptation. They say to themselves: "It cannot be necessary to be very particular in trifles," and so they are led on to dishonesty. It is in this way that thieves are generally made—they begin with the pence, and the pounds very soon follow. Petty thefts are most dangerous things, since they are not only sinful in them-

selves, but directly lead to more serious crimes ; they familiarize the mind with dishonesty, and take away those natural checks by which conscience would keep men in the right road, and by so doing open the door wide to the most serious temptations.

Everyone should remember that it is a very difficult, if not an impossible, thing to be *half* honest ; you may aim at being honest and upright in all things, or you may make up your mind to be a thief ; but it is difficult to draw a line between them, since the virtue of honesty is a whole—one beautiful thing which cannot be divided.

Some, who are not to be overcome by temptations because they are *small*, are, nevertheless, deluded by the particular form they take : they are dishonest in things to eat and drink, for example, and though, perhaps, they would never think of taking a penny, they make no scruple in appropriating things of ten times the value, because they come in a different form. There is another kind of excuse which is not confined always to the very poor ; that is, people sometimes think nothing of thefts from communities, or public bodies of any kind. You find many, for instance, who would consider it a trifle, or a joke, to defraud a railway company—just as if the fact of their being a company made the smallest difference in the morality of the action—and the same idea is carried a little farther, when people make light of theft because those who are plundered are rich. There are not half a dozen rules of honesty to be applied to different objects and different people, but one rule of honesty for all men and all things ; and if you are dishonest about one thing, you are in the high road to being dishonest in everything else, whatever excuses you may make to yourself. What St. James says of the whole of the Divine law, is especially true of honesty and of truthfulness : “ Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all ” (St. James ii. 10).

The little thefts of which I have been speaking, are rendered more dangerous by the habit of calling them by names which conceal the real nature of the act. If, for example, a man were to say to himself plainly : “ I am

going to steal so much from the railway company," or "I mean to be a thief in such and such objects," I think his conscience would reproach him; but because he calls it something else he goes on unchecked.

I now come to the second part of dishonesty, which is a very wide field, taking in "all manner of cheating in buying and selling, or any other way of wronging our neighbour:" all of which, as the Catechism tells us, "is forbidden by the Seventh Commandment." Men are led away by self-interest, by the example of others, by false and pernicious maxims, and so forth, till the world is full of dishonesty, and there are a great many who go on defrauding their neighbours, and yet manage to shut their own eyes, so as not to see the wrong they are doing. This renders it necessary to speak very plainly, and rather minutely, on these subjects.

To begin with: What is the difference in morality between theft and dishonesty? Simply, that one is, as a rule, more easily found out and more severely punished than the other. What difference does it make whether you cheat a neighbour out of a shilling, or put your hand into his pocket and take one? It comes to exactly the same thing, and yet there are thousands of people who would not for the world *directly* steal a shilling from a neighbour, who, nevertheless, think very little of getting a good many shillings by fraud.

The Catechism begins by speaking of "cheating in buying and selling," and well it may—false weights and unequal prices, unjust reckonings, and unsound goods, selling one thing for another: these have been the temptations of trade from the beginning, and have not died out in our time. "How much dost thou owe my lord? A hundred quarters of wheat? Take thy bill quickly, and sit down and write fifty!"

Holy Scripture says: "Thou shalt not have diverse weights in thy bag, a greater and a less; neither shalt there be in thy house a greater bushel and a less. Thou shalt have a just and true weight, and thy bushel shall be equal and true, that thou mayest live a long time upon the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee

For the Lord thy God abhorreth him that doth these things, and He hateth all injustice" (Deut. xxv. 13). And again: "Diverse weights, and diverse measures, both are abominable before God" (Prov. xx. 10). It would be a good thing if all who have to do with such matters would dwell upon these strong words.

But people will sometimes object that the custom of trade sanctions some things which, at first sight, look to be dishonest; that the public insists upon impossible conditions, and everybody *knows* that the articles sold are not exactly, and do not profess to be exactly, what they are called. All this is, no doubt, a difficulty to a conscientious trader, and something may reasonably be allowed to the customs of trade; but, on the other hand, there is a great fear that these excuses are sometimes mere pretexts for unfair dealing, and often delude honest men into becoming parties to a dishonest and rotten system of trading.

The next kind of dishonesty, which requires notice, is one which concerns all classes—it is honesty in paying our debts. There are, of course, many different kinds of debt—the debts incurred in domestic life, by borrowing money or buying goods, and, again, business debts arising out of different contracts, and so forth; and between these different sorts of debt great distinctions are sometimes made: for instance, a man will be very scrupulous in paying some debts, and very careless in others. Such distinctions, however, are quite groundless, and indeed immoral, as we are bound to do justice to all men alike, in business or out of it, and the same rules apply universally. It is just such ideas as these which lead to the reckless trading and the dishonest bankruptcies we sometimes hear about.

There are in the law a great many loopholes by which people can creep out of their liabilities before men, but we may be quite sure that before God anyone who contracts debts which he cannot pay is guilty of grievous injustice. If, for example, a person goes into a shop and buys something which he perfectly well knows he cannot pay for now, and is never likely to pay for, how is he better in

the sight of God than a thief? But, perhaps, he never thinks of it at all? That doesn't much mend the matter, because he knows very well all the time that he *ought* to consider whether he is able to pay. It is true that in business there are a great many chances, and there is liability to unforeseen accidents; all that is liberally provided for by law, and is no doubt a legitimate excuse for a good many who are unable to perform all their engagements; but still, when you hear of people failing for large sums of money, with nothing to meet their liabilities, it is very hard not to think that they must have incurred large debts which they *knew* they could never meet.

But if you are not *able* to pay your debts, your obligation, of course, ceases, since no one is obliged to do what is impossible; true, but it does not follow that you may, with a safe conscience, sit down and put away *your* liability from your mind. You are bound to *enable* yourself to pay your debts—that is, to make all reasonable exertions to get the money necessary. It is no excuse to say that you *can't* pay, if, with ordinary diligence and self-denial, you could do it if you liked.

It is not much use, however, to be honest about money, if you are not also honest about money's worth; and I must, therefore, speak of some kinds of dishonesty which do not immediately concern money. An important instance of these is waste of time. For instance—as I have said in an earlier sermon—a servant wasting time for which he is paid, by idling and doing nothing, is guilty of an act of dishonesty; and much more so, naturally—though people perhaps do not always remember it—is a public servant engaged, perhaps for high pay, in the service of the public, if he squanders his time; so, again, is a teacher who idles over the work he has undertaken. I am afraid that a good many people fail to see what strict honesty, to put aside other considerations, requires of them in some of these cases; and that many who would be very scrupulous over a few pence, are very unscrupulous about unjust waste of their time.

Injustice is also committed by want of knowledge.

If you undertake to do a thing for pay, and you have not got, and do not take the trouble to get, the knowledge requisite for doing it properly, it is clear that you are committing a great injustice against your neighbour. You are making a dishonest contract, and professing to give him, for his money, skill and knowledge which you have not got, and will not get. For example, a man undertakes to act as a lawyer, or a doctor, or a schoolmaster, whereas he is not fit for his work, and does not take the pains necessary to qualify himself—it is clear that he is guilty of a grievous injustice, since it is everyone's duty to see that he is competent for all that he undertakes to do.

What I have said of knowledge applies, of course, quite as much to *care*, since all the knowledge in the world is not much use without the care and diligence necessary to make it available.

Professional men, and a good many others in situations of trust, are paid for care, more than for anything else, and therefore a careless professional man, who does not give his mind to his work, but, as people say, *scamps* it, is undoubtedly acting a very dishonest part, since he is perpetually running the risk of inflicting serious and unjust injury on his neighbours.

I ought to mention that there are two kinds of care: there is the special care which a man is paid to give, or, at any rate, undertakes to give in virtue of the office which he holds; and there is the ordinary care which all men are bound to take, not to injure their neighbours. If you have undertaken any particular office, it is plain that you are bound in justice to use all reasonable diligence to discharge the duties attached to it. Supposing, for example, you have become a trustee for property, you are bound to take all the care which the trust requires—you are bound not to neglect it, and not to run risks beyond what is allowed by the conditions on which you have accepted the office. All this is very obvious, and yet nothing is more common than to find people undertaking duties without any consideration of the conscientious obligations which these offices involve.

Another form of injustice by want of care, is an

everyday complaint, and that is want of care of the property of masters and employers of all sorts. This is a kind of temptation to which servants are exposed ; if their masters' property is destroyed, things broken, substance wasted, the loss naturally does not come home to the servants, as it would do if the things were their own, and the loss, perhaps, makes very little difference to them personally. It requires, therefore, some consideration, and a good deal of conscientious feeling, to make them act as they ought to do by their employers' property. If they realized that part of their bargain was that they were to take care of the goods entrusted to them, and that they were guilty of injustice and dishonesty if they allowed this property to perish for want of proper and reasonable diligence, just as they would be if they made away with it, it is probable that they would not act in the careless manner we sometimes observe.

I now come to the last of the indirect ways of wronging our neighbours, which is often, however, one of the most serious : this is conniving at the wrong done by others. You may *connive* at wrong in many ways : for instance, you may assist the thief and give him opportunities, and so make his way plain ; and if you do so you are as guilty as he is. If, for instance, you have the charge of property, and either out of favour to friends, or through weakness and timidity, or out of mere carelessness, you give some one else an opportunity of stealing it, it is clear that you are responsible for the injury done. In the same way, if you are silent when it is your duty to speak—if you know, for example, that dishonest practices are going on which it is your duty to stop, and you say nothing, you make yourself a partaker in the dishonesty committed by your unjust connivance.

Those who receive stolen goods, and all who share in what is dishonestly obtained, are amongst the worst of those who connive at the injustice of others. It is commonly said : “The receiver is as bad as the thief,” and indeed he is sometimes much worse ; “if there were

no receivers, there would be no thieves," is pretty generally true, and the receiver is very often the person from whom the wrong originates, and without his co-operation it could not be carried out. The Holy Scripture says therefore: "he that is partaker with a thief hateth his own soul" (Prov. xxix. 24); and there is a beautiful illustration of this in the words of the blind old Tobias, when a kid was brought to him: "Take heed lest perhaps it be stolen: restore ye it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us to eat or to touch anything that cometh by theft" (Tob. ii. 21).

Those who are the receivers of stolen goods, or in any way partakers of what "cometh by theft," are very often guilty of two sins: they commit a sin of scandal by leading another into theft, or, at any rate, by encouraging him in his dishonesty—and they are also guilty of the wrong done to the neighbour who is defrauded. It is necessary, therefore, to be cautious wherever there is any reasonable ground for suspicion, because those who have once become partners in any kind of dishonesty, even by carelessness and want of thought, often find it very hard to get clear of the difficulty in which they have involved themselves.

All sins of dishonesty bring with them the duty of making restitution, and the Catechism tells us that "we are bound to restore ill-gotten goods if we are able, or else the sin will not be forgiven." The obligation of giving back what has been unjustly obtained, and making up for injury done to your neighbour, is a very serious one, and is often a difficulty in the way of those who have been dishonest. It is clear, however, that this is the first thing to be done by those who really repent of their dishonest practices. When our Lord paid a visit to Zaccheus, the chief of the Publicans, and brought "salvation to his house," we are told that "Zaccheus, standing, said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him four-fold" (St. Luke xix. 8), and in the law of Moses a thief was generally condemned to make a four-fold restitution. This was

intended as a punishment; but simple restitution, or making up the injury done, is not a punishment, but an obvious act of justice to which all men are bound.

You may be bound to make restitution on two distinct grounds: first, if you have unjustly defrauded your neighbour, or injured his property; and, secondly, if you have in your possession any property which belongs by right to another. If you have done an injury to anyone, either by stealing, or cheating, or destroying his property, you are bound to make up the loss, even if the property is all spent and consumed, and you have made no profit out of it for yourself: you are then bound to restitution on the ground of "unjustly taking." But if property has come honestly into your hands, and you then find out that it belongs to someone else, you are also bound to restitution, and if you did not give it back you would be guilty of a sin by "unjustly keeping" what belongs to another. To take a very common case: you find something in a public place—say, a purse or a locket; you are bound to use all reasonable means of finding the owner, and restoring it to him, and if you fail to do so, you are guilty of a sin of dishonesty by not giving it back, although, in the first instance, it was no fault of yours that the owner was deprived of his property.

It must, however, be said that to be obliged to make restitution for injuring your neighbour there must have been *fault* on your part. If you injure anyone by accident, without any intention of doing harm, you are not bound to make restitution: you may be called upon by the law to make up for the damage done, but, in conscience, you are only bound to make restitution where there has been sin. If you have been wickedly careless about your neighbour's property, or your neighbour's rights, you are bound to restore, because your carelessness has been a sin; but if there has been no intention of injury, and no sin of carelessness, there is no obligation in conscience to make good the damage. It is then merely an accident, of which all men must take their chance.

The Catechism says: "If you are able," because it is plain that no one can ever be *bound* to do a thing which is quite out of his power. A great many people, however, delude themselves about restitution, as they do about their debts; "if we are able" does not mean, if we can do it without any trouble or unpleasantness. We are not excused from doing justice to our neighbours because it would involve a considerable amount of exertion and self-denial to ourselves; and yet this is what the excuse of "not being able" generally means. It is no excuse to say, for instance, the man I wronged is at a distance, and it would be some trouble for me to find out his address, and send him what I owe him; or to say, I cannot spare the money to make restitution, because I want it for some other purpose advantageous to myself. If people repented of their evil deeds in the same spirit which Zaccheus showed when our Lord entered his house, it would very seldom happen that they could do *nothing* in the way of restitution. It is very easy to satisfy your confessor in such matters; what can he say if you declare positively that you can do nothing? But "there is One who seeth and judgeth."

I have only to add, on this point, that in cases where you cannot make restitution for wrong that you have done, because the person injured cannot be found, or for some other good reason, you are bound to make restitution by giving to the poor what you have unlawfully obtained.

I must conclude by saying once more that conscientiousness ought to be the mark of a Christian, and that this is what the world has a right to ask, and does ask of them. A Christian, therefore, who is underhand, and dishonest, and untrustworthy in his money-dealings, is a constant scandal to religion, and does harm to all around him. For this reason it is most important to have a high standard of honesty and commercial morality. If you take a high and severe view of your duty, and always insist upon calling things by their right names, instead of trying to make wrong seem

right, as this world so often does, you make it a great deal easier to be upright and honest in practice; whereas, if your theory is low, your practice is very apt to be lower still.

Each one ought to do his best to inculcate and enforce honest principles in his own sphere, and as far as possible to resist the contagion of dishonesty. Those who have an influential position, especially amongst commercial people, may do great good by always giving their voices in favour of sound morality and uprightness, and by steadily resisting dishonest maxims and practices.

In the same way, it is the duty of parents to teach their children to be honest, both by precept and example, as dishonest children are pretty sure to grow up into dishonest men and women.

It is a mistake to suppose that high principles and clear ideas of right and wrong come by nature, and require no teaching; on the contrary, it is certain that a neglect of proper teaching and proper control in childhood is one of the most fertile sources of evil principles and evil practice in after life.

The great remedy against all kinds of dishonesty and double dealing is the thought that God is present; the thief loves the darkness, but to him who has God before him there is no darkness; "for every one that doth evil hateth the light, that his works may not be reprov'd: but he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God" (St. John iii. 20).

We must also, my dear brethren, avoid that love of money from which all dishonesty springs—that covetousness which St. Paul tells us is "a worshipping of idols," remembering that all the riches of the world can never do anything for our real happiness without the blessing of God, which we can hope for only by doing our best to walk "in holiness and justice before Him all our days" (St. Luke i. 75).

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XXVIII.

Lying.

"Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh His soul detesteth . . . a deceitful witness that uttereth lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. vi. 16).

IN this passage, my dear brethren, the Holy Scripture gives a most prominent place, amongst the things hateful to God, to the sins of false witness and lying; and of these I must speak in this sermon. The Catechism tells us that "the eighth Commandment forbids all false testimony, rash judgment, and lies," and in these words are implied all the kinds of deceit and double-dealing which are to be found amongst men.

False testimony is the worst form of lying, because it is a lie told with the greatest deliberation and publicity, and one which is most injurious to human society. The false witness stands up before men and outrages truth, and does his best to pervert justice; he generally inflicts an injury upon some one, and is always guilty of a treason against the society in which he lives.

I have, however, to-day to consider the more general question of falsehood, not only in evidence, but in all the ordinary affairs of life. I must begin by trying to correct a common error, which is that of supposing that the evil of a lie comes from the bad consequences which result from it. You often hear people speak of "harmless lies," by which they mean lies which have not the immediate effect of injuring anybody. The sin of a lie does not depend upon the mischief it does, but simply on its being a violation of truth. God is the "very truth," and hates falsehood, not because it does harm, but because it *is* a falsehood. If a person tells a lie by which his neighbour is injured, he in reality com-

mits two sins—he is guilty of the sin of falsehood, and also of wronging his neighbour—and, in that sense, his lie is a greater sin than it would be if no one were hurt by it: but, in itself, one lie is just as bad as another, and that which is told with the greatest deliberation is the greatest lie.

The evil of a lie, of whatever sort it may be, consists in this: that it is opposed to the very nature and essence of Almighty God, in whose likeness we are made, and it cannot but be hateful to the Eternal Truth; and, secondly, that it is opposed to the good of human society. Men are able to live together, because they can trust each other; but if all mutual confidence were destroyed, there could be no society, and confidence depends upon truthfulness.

Let us now hear what the Holy Scripture says about it, that we may go by God's Word, and not our own fancy. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truthfully please Him," and "a false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape" (Prov. xii. 22—xix. 5). Again, the Psalmist says: "Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity: thou wilt destroy all that speak lies"—"Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? or who shall rest in Thy holy hill? . . . he that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue" (Ps. v. 27—xiv. 3). When St. John speaks of the new Jerusalem, where God reigns with His saints he is careful to tell us how all untruthfulness is excluded from that holy place:—"There shall not enter into it anything defiled, or that worketh abomination and maketh a lie." "But the fearful and unbelieving . . . and all liars, they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers and servers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie" (Ap. xxi. 8-27—xxii. 15).

It would be a good thing if some of those who talk so readily of "trifling lies," and "lies of no harm," would

dwell on these words: they would soon be convinced that everything like deceit and untruthfulness is an abomination to the Lord, and that the only way to please Him is by sincerity of heart and straightforwardness of tongue. Every lie is a sin, and must at some time or other, and in some way or other, be atoned for. Our Lord says: "Every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" (St. Matt. xii. 36). What a terrible liability must those incur who have the habit, not merely of idle words, but of falsehood, which is of its own nature displeasing to Almighty God!

The Holy Scripture tells us that "a lie is a foul blot in a man," and yet it will be continually in the mouth of men without discipline. "A thief is better than a man that is always lying; but both of them shall inherit destruction" (Eccles. xx. 26); and this leads us to another view of the question. A foul blot! From this we may form a good idea of the effect of a habit of lying. Such a habit is enough to spoil completely the most beautiful character that ever existed. If a man were furnished with every excellence in the world—only you knew that you could not trust a word that he said, you could not possibly respect him. You might pity him, and say that he was "no one's enemy but his own," and make excuses for him: you might admire his excellent qualities, taken by themselves, but you never could think that he was what a man and a Christian ought to be, so long as he was stained with the "foul blot" of falsehood and insincerity. The world is very full of liars, and many people easily tell falsehoods and excuse themselves for doing so, but all men have a natural dislike and contempt for falsehood; and, when they see it in others, they fully appreciate how great a stain and disfigurement it is to the human soul.

Let us now consider the different kinds of falsehood which are most common. The worst lies, of course, are those which spring from malice: these, as I have said, generally contain a second sin besides the violation of truth. Our Lord says the devil "was a murderer from

the beginning, and he stood not in the truth, because the truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father thereof" (St. John viii. 44). When a man tells a lie out of malice—that is, out of hatred, or envy of his neighbour, because he intends to do him an injury, or at least wishes to lower him in the eyes of others—he is imitating the conduct of the devil—the conduct by which he was, as our Lord tells us, "a murderer." A malicious lie, then, is a very great sin, as the lie seems to borrow bitterness from the evil spirit which is the cause of it, so that we may well apply, to those who lie maliciously, the words of Scripture: "Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they acted deceitfully: the poison of asps is under their lips" (Ps. xiii. 3).

The commonest of all lies, however, are lies of excuse. These come very natural to man, and it is sometimes very hard to see the evil of them: it seems so natural, and almost so reasonable to get out of a scrape by telling a lie of excuse, and yet this is just the most fatal way of lying, because from it all insincerity generally comes. Such lies must be considered "lies of cowardice." You tell a lie because you are afraid of some one—afraid of what can be done to you or said to you: or you are afraid of some little inconvenience which is likely to arise: what is all this but cowardice? If people could only bring themselves to see that every time they made untruthful excuses, they were guilty of an act of cowardice, I think they would easily correct themselves of the habit. What trifling things they are frightened of!—how shameful to be afraid of such things!—and yet, many a brave man, who would not shrink from real danger, commits sin after sin for fear of these little things—for want of a little moral courage.

Lies of excuse are not told, as a general rule, to obtain any great advantage: most people know perfectly well that they do not *profit* by the lies they tell: on the contrary, they are quite aware that it would be better for them if they always told the truth; so it is pretty clear that they must be considered as want of moral courage—or, as I have said, as lies of cowardice.

Such lies are very serious, because on moral courage depends the whole virtue of truthfulness. If you cannot face the difficulty of telling the truth when it is disagreeable, it is plain that you cannot have the virtue of truthfulness or straightforwardness of character. No one thanks you for telling the truth when it is favourable to you, and the very foundation of truth, as a virtue, is learning to speak it when opposed to your own interests.

The opportunity for lies of excuse is, moreover, constantly at hand, and so presents perpetual occasions of sin. If you are weak enough to make excuses, there is always something at hand which wants an excuse, so that you get into the habit of looking to see, not what is true, but what it is convenient to say, on all occasions. The habit of making excuses depends partly upon want of moral courage, and partly upon a desire to be always right: that is, a difficulty in believing or admitting that you are in the wrong. There are a great many people who never will admit that they are wrong: if they are accused of anything, their first feeling is that they have to show, in some way or another, that they were perfectly right. They have, somehow, to make the facts suit their conduct in the case, and to find out reasons for all that they have done: so, naturally, they find out reasons which would be excellent, only they are not true. All this leads to an insincere and untruthful condition of mind, so that at last they can hardly be said to tell the plain, straightforward truth about anything.

These considerations show how important it is to avoid trifling lies of excuse: they may seem small things, and they are about unimportant matters; but, on the other hand, they are generally very deliberate, and one lie leads to another, so that they quite destroy the virtue of truthfulness in the soul. People cannot be *half* truthful: you must make up your mind to be truthful at all times, and in all things, or it is a mere matter of chance and accident how many lies you tell—and, indeed, you can hardly be said ever to tell the truth, if you simply say what is convenient, whether true or false.

There is another kind of falsehood on which it is necessary to dwell, because it is very common and does a great deal of harm. A great many lies spring from vanity and the desire to tell a good story. You will find many people who have always something to say about themselves—"pulling the long bow"—or "romancing," as it is sometimes called. They will make themselves the heroes of all sorts of remarkable and strange adventures: they always have seen something wonderful, or done something different from anyone else. Their vanity is so strong, and so little checked, that it is perpetually borrowing plumes from every side to deck itself with. Such people can scarcely come across any fresh object, or be impressed by any striking history, without inventing some new story for themselves, and glorifying themselves by some new decoration. This fault is constantly found amongst children who live a great deal in their own imagination. They very easily mix up fact and fiction, till, if they are not properly checked and reminded of the necessity of being accurate in what they say, they get hardly to know whether they are speaking truth or falsehood.

This is a most deplorable and disastrous habit, and, if people indulge in it in after life, it can hardly fail to render them an object of contempt and suspicion to everyone with whom they come in contact. It may be said these things do not do much harm. Yes, they do—they destroy the virtue of truthfulness, and the trust which men ought to have in each other: one lie leads to another, and he who is untruthful in one thing, is pretty sure, in the long run, to be untruthful in everything else.

I must now say a few words on another part of the subject which is not quite so plain, and that is about "jocose lies"—stories told in jest—the things which people say to each other on the First of April, and so forth. It is rather difficult to lay down an exact rule. If you are really speaking in jest, and those to whom you are talking may reasonably be supposed to know that you are only joking—or, at any rate, might know it with a

little ordinary consideration—it cannot be called a lie, because a serious intention of deceiving is essential to the idea of a lie, and no form of speech by which you do not *mean* to deceive can ever be a lie. On the other hand, it must be said that jokes of this kind are dangerous, and if you are too fond of saying what is not true in jest, you are easily led into saying it in earnest.

There are certain forms of speech in common use in society which are sometimes the cause of scruple and perplexity. It is very usual, for instance, for people to tell their servants to say, “Not at home” to their visitors, when, in fact, they *are* at home. It is lawful to do this, because at the present day, the words “not at home” have got a distinct meaning which everybody is supposed to understand, and, as a rule, *does* understand. Whatever these words meant in the beginning, and mean literally, they are *now* used as a polite way of saying that, if at home, the master of the house declines to receive visitors. In a similar way, there are many ordinary expressions of politeness which, literally speaking, are exaggerations—but everyone knows what such forms are intended to convey, and there is no fear of deceiving anybody by them.

A great deal might here be said about “equivocations” and the kind of behaviour which people call “acting a lie,” and the numberless other ways of deceiving your neighbour; but it is a long subject, and a very few words will be sufficient. You may never tell a lie, but you are certainly not bound to tell the whole truth on all occasions: on the contrary, a man who always said all that he thought and knew, would do a great deal of mischief, and would be a great nuisance in society. You may and should hold your tongue, and leave people in ignorance on a great many subjects: you are often obliged to avoid, or turn aside, foolish questions which you cannot, or ought not to answer, and it is generally easy enough to do this without any untruth, and, if necessary, you must have moral courage enough to refuse to answer. On the other hand, everything like pretence or dissimulation, or any way of misleading your neighbour, however

plausible it may appear, is always to be avoided. St. Paul says: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbour, for we are members one of another" (Eph. iv. 25), and our Lord Himself says: "Let your speech be yea, yea, and nay, nay, and that which is over and above these is of evil" (St. Matt. v. 37). The more straightforward the way in which you act towards those who are "members of one body" with you, the better, and if you have the moral courage not to be afraid of being sometimes found fault with, and can avoid the petty vanity of wanting to be always in the right, and to appear better than you really are, you will find no difficulty in straightforwardness.

I must say a few words now about the effects of the habit of lying on those who are unfortunate enough to give way to it. It is hardly necessary to say much of the immediate spiritual effect of such a sin: a lie is always a sin, and he who gives way to habitual falsehood is always lying: who can reckon up the number of sins that he commits? His habit is no excuse for him, because he could break it off if he chose; and, moreover, a lie is generally, of its own nature, a fully deliberate act—so that every falsehood is a stain upon his soul. Every sin a man commits is a stain by which the white garment of God's grace is defiled, and lying in particular is, as the Holy Scripture says, "a foul blot." How then shall the liar "dwell in His tabernacle, or rest on the holy hill" (Ps. xiv. 1)?

But the sin of falsehood is, in a peculiar manner, a sin against the society of men, and we will now consider how lying is punished *as a sin against society*. Those who speak untruly of course do so with some motive: they tell falsehoods because they have some end to obtain. As a rule, they are punished, in the long run, by failing in all the objects they propose to themselves. A person tells lies of excuse to avoid blame: if ever he does anything wrong or foolish he tells a falsehood to cover it. In a very short time no one believes a word of his excuses, and he gets blame, not only for what he has

done, but for a great many things he has not done. He has told a falsehood to avoid losing the good opinion of those over him—of his parents, or masters, or employers ; but the actual effect of the falsehood is that, in a very short time, he loses the good opinion of all his superiors, and is despised by them : how can they fail to despise one whom they cannot trust for a moment ? I think everyone who is in the habit of untruthfulness would admit in a very short time that the result of all his ingenuity in falsehood had been to lower him very much in the opinion of everyone around him : in short, that it had produced an effect the exact opposite of what was intended.

Take another style of falsehood, and you will find the same thing. A man exaggerates everything he does, and gives a most flourishing and untrue account of himself and all his actions, and is, perhaps, constantly inventing some story or other to gratify his vanity. What he clearly wants is to fill his neighbours with a great admiration for himself and his performances, and to make them listen, with great wonder and attention, to all he has to say. In a very little while, however, people cease to believe a word of all his wonderful stories, and do not pay any attention to what he says, and, instead of looking at him with increased respect, simply treat him with contempt. Here again you see that falsehood has done exactly the reverse of what it was intended to do.

There is another way in which society punishes falsehood, or rather in which falsehood punishes itself. People tell lies that they may get some extra advantage for themselves from others. A man will tell a very plausible tale to get assistance, not one word of which is true. How does this work in the end ? The result generally is that no one can help him, or do anything for his permanent assistance. If you have ever tried to help a poor man—to take up zealously the case of some one in great distress, let us suppose—and then have found out that you could not believe a word he said, did you not feel at once that all your efforts to do any good

for him would be thrown away? The fact that he is not to be trusted has put him beyond the reach of assistance from his brethren.

The same thing happens with another kind of falsehood. A child or a young man is very cunning and false, and contrives to elude and deceive all those who are over him, and to give all his superiors a false notion of his character. What is the result? He has shut the door against all improvement; he has closed all the channels by which he might have received information, or advice, or warning, and will suffer, all the days of his life, for the great cleverness with which he succeeded in deceiving others. The one result obtained was that he effectually prevented others from giving him any assistance.

There is another consideration on which I must now dwell, and this is effect of the vice of untruthfulness on the mind and heart of the person who practises it. Let us suppose, for a moment, that falsehood were not a sin against God, and that it did not in any way injure our neighbours or effect our dealings with them, still it would have a most pernicious effect upon ourselves. Our Lord says: "Beware, ye, of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (St. Luke xii. 1). The Pharisees had a great many excellent qualities; they had piety of a sort, and much zeal and self-denial, but these good qualities were all spoiled by this leaven of hypocrisy. They were full of false pretences; they professed to have one object, and they had another; they said one thing, and meant another; and these false pretences ruined everything they attempted, and made them odious in the sight of God. St. Paul says: "Know you not that a little leaven corrupteth the whole mass? Purge out the old leaven, that you may be unleavened: for Christ, our pasch, is sacrificed. Therefore let us feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 6). A little leaven is enough to corrupt the whole mass, and a very little insincerity and untruthfulness of character is sufficient to spoil all the best quali-

ties of the human soul. The habit of untruth is an intellectual injury, to begin with. Your understanding was given you to enable you to appreciate and value truth; that you might distinguish accurately between truth and falsehood; that you might reject whatever was untrue. If you employ your intellect in devising ways to conceal the truth, and make what is false appear to be true, you cannot fail, by degrees, to create a real mental confusion between truth and falsehood. This is abundantly exemplified in practice: take almost any one who has been long in the habit of false speaking, you will see that he has almost lost the power of distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

He makes you a series of excuses, but hardly knows himself how much of them is true, and how much false; he tells you a long story, but perhaps he would himself be puzzled to say what had really happened, and what was his own invention. A man like this clearly has injured his own mental faculties by continued untruth. It is the same thing with the heart. A man ought, by his nature, not only to be keen in distinguishing the truth, but ought to love the truth, and hate falsehood. "O ye sons of men! how long will you be dull of heart? why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv. 3). If a man accustoms himself to falsehood, and has it always on his lips, how can he have any love for truth? It is clear the habit in which he indulges will soon corrupt his heart, and he will become indifferent to truth; he will cease to have the love and respect which everyone ought to have for truth in itself. "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and lying lips cannot fail to make a deceitful heart.

The leaven of hypocrisy and untruthfulness very soon infests the whole being, and influences all the actions. If you begin by being untruthful and insincere in your intercourse with men, you will very likely become insincere and hypocritical even in your dealings with Almighty God. If a man has accustomed himself to deceit, he cannot be quite straightforward in anything: half his religion is a sham; he does not mean what he

says in his prayers, and his aspirations and promises to Almighty God are all more or less insincere.

A man begins by deceiving all around him, but he generally finishes by deceiving himself also; he is so accustomed to make excuses that, he is always calling evil good, and wrong right, and contrives to delude even himself as to his own conscience, and gets into that dangerous state against which the Psalmist prays when he says: "Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins" (Ps. cxl. 4).

When a man gets into this state, his good resolutions and promises are all delusive, and have no effect but to complete his own self-deception. "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, that man's religion is in vain" (St. James i. 26).

When our Lord's enemies came to tempt Him, they said: "Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man, for Thou dost not regard the person of man" (St. Matt. xxiii. 16). Here, my dear brethren, is the model which all Christians ought to imitate. We should love truth in our own hearts, not for any worldly advantage or profit that it may bring with it, but for *itself*, because it is dear to that God who is truth itself; and we must speak it on all occasions, great and small. We must not "regard the person of men"—that is, we must not allow any consideration of their favour or disfavour, their smiles or their frowns, the hope of their approbation or the fear of their hard words, to turn us away from the path of integrity and truthfulness. It ought to be our ambition so to act that, whatever else our enemies may say against us, they shall be obliged to bear witness to us, as they did to our Master, that we are "true speakers," following the way of God in truth, and that, where conscience is concerned, we "do not regard the person of men." Amen.

Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON XXIX.

Evil Speaking.

“Refrain your tongue from detraction. for an obscure speech shall not go for nought; and the mouth that believeth killeth the soul” (Wis. i. 11).

THE sins of the tongue, by which men injure their neighbours, are closely connected with the vice of lying: and it is of these, principally, that I mean to speak to-day. Such sins may be considered as coming under two of the Commandments: they are a wrong and an injustice to others, and, as such, are forbidden by the Seventh Commandment;—and they are sins which generally involve some degree of falsehood, so that they are considered as belonging to the eighth. The Catechism says: “Calumny, detraction, and tale-bearing, and any words which injure our neighbour’s character, are forbidden by the Eighth Commandment.”

It is hardly necessary to speak of the evil of these sins, since everybody knows that they are one of the great pests of society, and the cause of half the troubles of the world. If you speak in such a manner as to injure a neighbour’s character, you do him an injustice; but that is only a part of the harm done. You wound his feelings, and give a degree of pain which no ordinary injustice would inflict. Besides this, you have probably set on foot some quarrel of which it is impossible to see the end, for we all know how bitter is the feeling which people have against those who have “belied them,” and how hard a thing it is to forgive.

There are two distinct sins of this character, of which the first is the sin of calumny. Calumny means telling a lie to injure your neighbour: falsely accusing him of some crime. In this one act, as I have before said, two sins are contained: it is a theft and a lie. You take

away your neighbour's most precious property—his good name—and you do it by falsehood. I need say nothing about the baseness of those who maliciously calumniate: that is, of those who intentionally blacken their neighbour's character by falsehood, for the sake of doing him harm: these are, of course, the worst, but they are not the only calumniators. Those who tell lies of their neighbours, either to excuse themselves or out of carelessness, do nearly or quite as much harm. Many people, in their eagerness to excuse themselves, do not scruple to lay blame on others, or cause the blame of what they have done to be imputed to others. There are some again—and, indeed, a great many—who are calumniators out of mere carelessness. They speak evil of their neighbours, and make accusations against them, without caring whether their words injure their neighbours or not, or taking the trouble to consider whether what they say is, or is not, true. If you say something about your neighbour in this manner, which does him an injury, and which, on examination, turns out to be an untruth, you cannot doubt that you have been guilty of the sin of calumny, and have incurred a serious responsibility before God. It is no excuse to say that you never *meant* to harm your neighbour, and that you *supposed* that what you said was true—or didn't think about it: you are responsible for your words, and for the unjust injury which they inflict.

There are many classes of people who are guilty of calumny to a greater or less degree. Those who *invent* lies of their neighbours, of course, come the first; but those who exaggerate are not very far off. They hear stories, true or false, and then improve upon them a little; they make them a little more pointed and *telling*—they add a few details which they think were, *perhaps*, true, and so touch up the story, and send it on, greatly improved and much more effective. What is this but real lying and calumny, if you would only call things by their right names? Is the person who has thus improved and embellished the story much less guilty than the original inventor? Those who hand on bad stories

about their neighbours cannot be excused from the sin of calumny, even if they tell them correctly, if they have not taken any pains to find out whether such tales are true or false. If you pass on a story to some one else, you give it an additional authority, and make yourself responsible for it; if, all the while, the story is a falsehood, and, with a little trouble and consideration, you might have known that it was a falsehood, you certainly share in the guilt of calumny.

Detraction is a sin which is very closely allied to calumny, although it does not include the sin of falsehood. Detraction means telling the truth about your neighbour when it is injurious to his character, and you have no sufficient reason for speaking. There is an old proverb which says: "The greater the truth, the greater the libel." A true accusation, or one which contains a good deal of truth, is much more injurious to any one than a story which is utterly false. If you are able to deny a thing entirely, and to say that it is a lie from beginning to end, it is comparatively easy to defend yourself; but if you are forced to admit that the story is true, or partly true, you cannot escape, and, therefore, your accuser has really injured you more by his truth than a dozen people could have done by *mere* lying.

If you injure your neighbour by speaking ill of him, it is no excuse that what you say is true: you may *not* tell the truth to the disadvantage of others, without a very good reason. Supposing, therefore, that you happen to learn some secret connected with your neighbour's character—you would be guilty of a great sin of detraction if you spoke about it to others; you would have done him a wrong, because he has a right that his secrets should not be told without necessity.

There are, of course, circumstances which may give you a right to say what you know; it may be necessary for your own protection or the sake of others. If a man set up in business in your neighbourhood, and you had reason to know that he was an impostor and a swindler, and was likely to injure other people, it is clear that you would have a perfect right to speak out: and this

example illustrates a great many cases. You are not bound to be silent about matters of public interest, or about things which are already tolerably well known, but you may not speak of secret failings, or sins, or misfortunes of others, unless you have some distinct and sufficient reason for doing so.

When I speak about things which injure a neighbour's character, I mean not only sins, but all those things which are likely to be injurious or painful to him if spoken of—such things as faults of character, defects, misfortunes, things likely to render him an object of ridicule to others. Christian charity obliges us to be silent about such things, and not to injure our neighbour by mentioning them without very sufficient reason.

St. James says: "Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger" (St. James i. 19); and there is no doubt that the great way to avoid sins of calumny and detraction is by being "slow to speak," and avoiding, as far as possible, unnecessary conversation about our neighbours. The habit of talking about the faults of others is generally a sign of idleness and vacuity of mind, and those who are much given to conversation of this sort, are like those of whom St. Paul says: "And withal being idle, they learn to go about from house to house, and are not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. v. 13).

We cannot always help speaking of our neighbours, however, so we must learn to speak in a proper and Christian way about them. To do this, we must take care to be very exact in our statements, and not to say one word more than we *know* to be true, and, besides this, to speak kindly and charitably of them. We never can be sure that we know the whole story, and there are often palliating circumstances and excuses, even in the worst cases, which have never come to our knowledge, and, therefore, we ought always to be a little reserved in our judgments.

There are always two ways of looking at the conduct of others: you may hope for the best, and try to put

the best construction on it, and see it in the most favourable light ; or you may secretly, perhaps unconsciously, hope for the worst, and make things as bad as you can. St. Paul says : " Charity is patient, is kind, . . . rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things " (1 Cor. xiii. 4). It is not uncommon to find people who have the habit of slightly depreciating every one they speak about ; if you are long in their company, you feel that every person mentioned has been a little lowered in your estimation, and that something unfavourable or slighting has been said of nearly all those upon whom the conversation has turned. Nothing can produce a worse impression or do more harm than this tone of conversation, and, therefore, every one should be on his guard against falling into it.

There is another fault which is almost worse than speaking ill of your neighbour, and that is mischief-making. " He that soweth discord among brethren " is put by the Holy Scripture in the most prominent place amongst those things which " the Lord hateth " and " His soul detesteth," and detraction would do comparatively little harm, if it were not for mischief-makers. There are some people who seem to find a pleasure in going from one person to another, to report all the unpleasant things which have happened, and all the disagreeable things that have been said. Such people put on a fine appearance of candour ; they " merely tell you for your good " and so forth, whereas what has been said generally matters very little, if there is no " tattler " and " busybody " to report it, and turn it into a cause of quarrel.

Mischief-making sometimes taken the form of " telling tales," and sometimes of reporting speeches. It is, of course, occasionally necessary to tell of the wrong-doing of other people, either for their correction or to provide against injury which may be caused by them, but it is a thing always to be avoided, unless there is some real necessity.

The other form of mischief-making is *very* seldom

necessary, and scarcely ever fails to do harm. It is almost impossible to report speeches fairly, because the meaning of them depends so much upon the rest of the conversation, and upon the tone and spirit in which they are said, that they generally look much more serious when repeated by a third person. Trifling things are apt to appear important when repeated, and, if really serious, the injury is greatly increased by repetition. We ought always to check a tendency to making mischief, either in ourselves or in others. If unpleasant speeches are reported to us, it is generally because we encourage others to be tale-bearers; and if we all disliked tale-bearers as much as we should, there would be very little mischief made.

There is another point to be considered with regard to sins of calumny and detraction, and that is, the duty of making restitution. These sins are acts of injustice, and therefore the Catechism tells us that "he who has injured his neighbour by speaking ill of him must make him satisfaction, and restore his good name as far as he can." He must do "what he can" to make up to his neighbour for the injury inflicted—but that unfortunately is, generally speaking, very little. It is very easy to take away another's good name, but it is a very difficult matter to restore it. If a distinct falsehood has been told, it is, of course, possible to contradict it afterwards; but, as a rule, all that you can say in atonement will have very little effect—the injury is done, and only time and patience will repair it. It is necessary to use great prudence in all attempts to restore your neighbour's good name," as there is a great chance of doing more harm than good, and it is generally the wisest course to say nothing. There are, however, some cases in which, by detraction, people injure their neighbours, not only in good name, but also in their property; if, for instance, you were to say something seriously affecting the character of a man of business, you would not only hurt his good name, but, very likely, injure his business. In all such cases you are bound to make a money restitution for the money injury inflicted.

I will conclude the subject by saying that whilst people ought to be careful not to injure their neighbours by speaking ill of them, on the other hand we ought not to be too sensitive about every ill-natured thing that is said. Generally speaking, it matters very much less than we suppose, and it is only vanity that makes us think so much of it. We fancy that people care a great deal about us and our characters, whereas, as a rule, they do not take the trouble to think of us at all, and they very soon forget all about it, if only we will let them.

I have a few words to add on the more general subject of the Eighth Commandment, of which calumny and detraction form a part. I have spoken of the vice of lying, and I have tried to show what a disgrace and misfortune it is to have the habit of untruthfulness. How is this habit to be avoided? how can it be cured?

In the first place, it must be remembered that strict truthfulness is not a quality that comes by itself—it is a virtue to be gained by prayer and by practice.

Truth and falsehood are, to a great extent, matters of habit; every lie leads to other lies, and makes truth more difficult, whereas every time that you exert yourself to make an act of moral courage, by telling the truth in spite of difficulties, you render it easier to be truthful on the next occasion. People often have a general intention of being truthful, but then the temptation comes just to tell a lie “this once” to escape from a perplexity, and the moment never arrives when truthfulness can be acquired without a great and difficult act of moral courage.

Those who would avoid the vice of lying must cultivate a great love for the virtue of truth, or else they will never bring themselves to make the sacrifices necessary to obtain it. If you have a great idea of the beauty of truthfulness in itself, and think how pleasing it is to God, and think, moreover, of the great advantages which it brings to all who practise it, both in this world and the next, you will find it easy enough to be truthful. Those who really love truth never

tamper with falsehood—they never make light of it or consider it as a joke, or call it by wrong names: a lie is to them always a lie, and always an object of detestation, under whatever circumstances it may be told. A love of truth, moreover, includes some accuracy of mind. If you do not take much trouble to distinguish between truth and falsehood, it is not likely that you will make any great sacrifice to tell the truth even when you know what it is.

The most fertile of all sources of falsehood, however, is perhaps the habit of making excuses. A person who is always excusing himself is *never* very truthful, and, therefore, those who wish to acquire the habit of strict truthfulness must be very much on their guard against excuses, and must make up their minds to be silent, and allow themselves to be blamed rather than make thoughtless and inaccurate excuses for their conduct.

If we wish, however, to gain the virtue of truthfulness, we must rely, most of all, upon the assistance of Almighty God, and trust to the use of prayer and the Sacraments. St. James says: "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given to him" (St. James i. 5). And it is the same with all other virtues. If you find it hard to tell the truth in circumstances of difficulty, make it a matter of prayer, and of self-examination, and God will give you the grace to overcome the difficulties.

I must conclude by speaking of a subject in connection with truthfulness, which appears to me to be of very great importance—and that is, of the duty of teaching children to speak the truth; and I do this even at the risk of repeating a good deal that I have said in a former sermon. A large proportion of the habitual lying and general carelessness about truth which we find in the world, comes from the bad teaching of parents in childhood, or the want of any teaching at all—and, perhaps, from the want of ordinary care on the part of teachers at school afterwards.

All reasonably good parents know the value of truth,

and are quite aware that, of all the good things they could give to their children, a habit of strict truthfulness would be the most valuable; and yet, whilst they spend time and money in teaching them all sorts of other things, they do not take the least trouble to see that they are acquiring habits of truth and straightforwardness. I suppose this is because they have a notion that truthfulness comes of itself, and they cannot believe that their little innocent children can ever be guilty of falsehood. This is a fatal mistake. You may be sure that your children have, by nature, the same faults, and perversities, and weaknesses as the rest of mankind—and, therefore, that if you do not take the trouble to teach them to be good, they are very likely to be bad.

You must not, therefore, take their goodness for granted in *anything*, but must apply yourself diligently to showing them the way of virtue. To begin with, you must not teach them to lie: I do not mean in so many words, but by treating a lie as a small thing. People sometimes carelessly speak of a “trifling” lie as a joke, or, perhaps, rather as a clever thing, or a thing which is no great harm in some cases; and they forget that their children will learn that lesson easily enough. Sometimes parents will even use their children as instruments of deceit, and put a lie into their mouths, by making them repeat excuses and histories which are untrue. Sometimes, again, fathers and mothers will not scruple to tell little convenient lies to their children, or in their presence, and they fancy that the children will not find them out. Unfortunately, however, the inherent tendency of human nature renders them very sharp in such things, and makes them exceedingly apt pupils in deceit, and they will very soon learn the lesson their parents have taught them, and practise it assiduously for themselves.

It is necessary, besides this, to speak to them of the importance of telling the truth—how pleasing truthfulness is to God, and how hateful any kind of lie is to Him. These things are very obvious, but the children do not know them unless they are told, or know them

only in a vague and uncertain way by the light of nature. Parents are sometimes shy of speaking quietly and gravely of such things to their children: it seems to them a kind of preaching, which they do not like; but it is very necessary, notwithstanding, and a few grave words from their parents will often produce more effect than all the eloquent sermons they are destined to hear in after life. The next thing obviously is, not to frighten them or hurry them into falsehood. If you give way to unreasonable anger, and are very harsh and stern about trifling faults they commit, you cannot be surprised if they get into the way of telling lies of excuse: you cannot expect any wonderful moral courage from young children—it is a quality which they have as yet to learn and practise, and, therefore, you must be patient and forbearing. Again, you must not hurry them; many a child would tell the truth if allowed a few moments for consideration, and questioned quietly and gently, but is hurried into lie, and when once committed to it, is almost necessarily led on to many more.

Boys and girls are, moreover, constantly led into falsehood by foolish or unreasonable questions. Their parents will sometimes ask questions which, they ought to know, *cannot* be answered, or which it requires an unusual degree of fortitude to answer correctly. “*Why* did you do so and so?” Probably there is *no* reason, or no presentable reason, to give—what can the poor child do but invent a reason, if such a question is insisted upon? Again, parents sometimes ask questions which the children will feel to be unfair, or which it is against their sense of honour to answer truly. This applies, perhaps, still more to schoolmasters. To save themselves trouble, they will sometimes ask elaborate questions involving other people, which cannot be answered without betraying companions, and doing other things which seem dishonourable and unfair. Such inconsiderate questioning is often the foundation of a habit of deceit. The old proverb: “Ask me no questions, and I’ll tell you no lies,” with a little modification, is not a bad guide for parents and masters. Do not ask too many questions,

and do not ask them without considering whether they can be easily and fairly answered, and you will escape much danger of teaching your children to lie.

The next important thing in educating children to speak the truth, is to place confidence in them. If you do not trust them, or value what they say, you cannot expect them to take much trouble about veracity, as the self-respect which they ought to have, is necessarily wounded by unreasonable distrust. On the other hand, the trust you place in them must be a *reasonable* and not a blind trust. If your children know that you always take for granted that they are telling the truth whatever they say—if you never take the trouble to test their accuracy, and always implicitly believe them in a conflict of testimony, it is often too great a temptation for human weakness, and your blind confidence may easily lead them into a course of deceit.

If you want your children to speak the truth, you must encourage them to be open with you. If they once learn to have confidence in you, so that they are not afraid to communicate to you their feelings and ideas, and can trust you in all their troubles, there is not much difficulty in making them truthful. This openness of character, without disguise or concealment—the virtue of simple truthfulness—is one of the special beauties of childhood. “And in their mouth there was found no lie, for they are without spot before the throne of God” (Ap. xiv. 5). This should be the characteristic of all children, but it is very often blighted by carelessness and hastiness or over-severity, by cutting words and ridicule, or by want of proper encouragement. You cannot *command* openness on the part of your children—you must be content to gain it by patience and encouragement. I was before speaking of the importance of accuracy of mind, and here, naturally, it is in the power of parents to help their children.

It is easy for their elders—for those, at least, who have their confidence—to lead children into the habit of considering what they say, and of avoiding exaggeration, and, in short, it is easy to help them to acquire all those

mental qualities which are necessary for truthfulness. A child who has been in the habit of free conversation with judicious parents and elders, can hardly fail to get into a habit of accurate speech.

Above all, however, my dear brethren, one thing is necessary, and that is never to pass over a lie of any sort without rebuke. It is foolish, indeed, to speak to your children as if a lie were always a sin of the blackest kind—a thing which was quite unheard of—which was a lasting disgrace, and so forth; exaggeration of this kind always does harm, and easily has the effect of making them hypocrites, and shutting the door against repentance; but you must always show them that a lie pains *you*, not because it has done some harm, and caused mischief, but because it *is* a lie; you must show the effect that it has in lowering the person who tells it, and destroying confidence, and, above all, that it is a sin against Almighty God—one which required real repentance and contrition.

I must conclude what I have been saying on this most important subject of truth by a few words about the scandal it causes. I suppose that scarcely any kind of sin committed by religious people does so much harm as sins of untruthfulness. Truth is a natural virtue, and very strict truthfulness is very often found amongst many who, unfortunately, are indifferent to religion. When people of this kind hear of anything like laxity about truth amongst Catholics, either of laxity in theory, or of carelessness in practice, they are very apt to assume that these faults come from religion, instead of being, as they are, the result of the weakness and perversity of human nature. Such sins, therefore, have, more than others, a tendency to turn people against our holy faith. This is true at all times, and particularly true in our own time and country. God is the very truth, and requires that His children should love the truth and speak the truth. “God is a spirit, and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth” (St. John iv. 24).

Catholic Sermons

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SERMON XXX.

Bad Thoughts.

"The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21).

WE all of us have abundant experience, my dear brethren, of the truth contained in the words of Holy Scripture: and we know only too well how difficult it is to discipline and control our own hearts. The ninth and tenth Commandments treat specially of sins of the heart—of bad thoughts and evil desires. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife"—"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods." We cannot pay too much attention to the discipline of our own hearts: they are, as I have before said, the special kingdom of God within us, of which He has made us, and us only, masters. In this interior kingdom we are supreme lords, no one can interfere with us, and with God's grace, we are always able to produce good fruit in it, if we will. All virtue and all vice proceed from the heart, since external acts are dependent upon the will for their goodness or wickedness.

Our Lord says to the Pharisee: "Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you are like whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness" (St. Matt. xxiii. 27). These strong words apply to those who do not endeavour to discipline their own hearts and keep them pure and virtuous; their outward lives may be all that is excellent in the sight of men, but before God they are mere "whited sepulchres."

This, however, is not to be made an excuse for neglecting external duties. People sometimes say: "How

can I do or say such and such a thing, when I cannot really feel it? How can I pay marks of respect, or show external signs of forgiveness, with my present dispositions? It is mere hypocrisy!" All this is simply an excuse: if you make up your mind to do what is right because it is your duty, your feelings will soon follow as far as is necessary, and you need not be afraid of hypocrisy."

The first subject to consider is that of "rash judgment," which the Catechism treats under the Eighth Commandment. What is rash judgment? It is not rash judgment to decide that a thing is wrong, which common sense tells you *is* wrong. Christian charity never obliges you to call wrong, right; or bad, good; and it is not rash judgment to suspect a person of a fault when there is good ground for suspicion. Rash judgment means judging unnecessarily and harshly, and without any reasonable grounds for deciding. We should try to avoid judging our neighbours, for our Lord says: "Judge not, that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (St. Matt. vii. 1). It is very seldom that we are really called upon to judge; no one wants our opinion, and we are very incompetent to form an opinion in most cases: why, then, should we be in such a hurry to decide? "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own lord he standeth or falleth" (Rom. xiv. 4).

You find people who are always ready to decide on any point, and never stop to consider whether there is any sufficient proof to justify such a decision: such people never dream of suspending their judgment till they are sufficiently informed, and are so far from wishing to hear both sides of a question, that they never listen patiently to anything that does not agree with the view they have already taken. Can any judgment be more rash or uncharitable? If we are to judge, let us be merciful judges, and consider the excuses that may be made for others, and give them the benefit of

the doubts that arise, and, at least, let us make allowance for the weakness of human nature. "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1). This is the way in which we ought to judge—"the spirit of meekness," lest we "also be tempted."

One common kind of rash judgment is that of *generalising* too much, and not only condemning your neighbour for what you have reason to know he has done, but taking it for granted that he has done a great deal more also, for which he deserves condemnation.

I now come to speak of sins of thought generally, and shall find it necessary to dwell in detail upon some of the more dangerous kinds. It is hardly necessary to say that a sin of thought may be a grievous sin, even though it never appears in word or action, and has no outward expression whatever. The Holy Scripture tells us that "evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 26), and "perverse thoughts separate from God." If, for instance, a bad thought occurs to you, and you realise that it is unlawful and odious to Almighty God, and your conscience points out that it is your clear duty to reject the idea, and turn your mind away from it—yet, in spite of this warning, you choose deliberately to cherish the thought and delight in it, you cannot doubt that you have rebelled against God just as much as you would have done by persisting in an external action which you knew to be forbidden.

Sins of thought are of two kinds—they are either intentions and desires, or they are *complacencies*—that is, taking pleasure in unlawful thoughts. If you make up your mind that you *will* do something when the opportunity arises, or else that you *would* do it if circumstances allowed you, you are guilty of the thing itself in the sight of God, by your evil desire and intention, since, as our Lord says: "But I say to you that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (St.

Matt. v. 28). There may, however, be no intention at all, and the thoughts may have no reference to the future, and then the sin is one of complacency—that is, the unlawful object to which you attach yourself, and for which you leave Almighty God, is the wicked thought itself, and the satisfaction you derive from contemplating and cherishing it.

People often go on committing sinful acts, and in a way are sorry for the wrong they do, but never overcome their sinful habits, because they never take the trouble to find out and check the inward fault from which it arises. It is very important, therefore, to dwell upon interior dispositions—not only for themselves, but that we may be able to resist the actual sins to which they lead.

Let us begin with interior pride, which is the source of a great many sins. The Holy Scripture says: “Pride is hateful before God and men. . . . The beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God, because his heart is departed from Him that made him; for pride is the beginning of all sin: he that holdeth it shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end” (Eecl. x. 7—14). Pride, in its highest degree, is a worship of self: it consists of an inordinate and unreasonable admiration of oneself, and of one’s own powers of body and mind; it contains, also, self-sufficiency, or too great a belief in oneself, and independence of all others, and goes on to a worship of self, or making everything give way, and pay homage to ourselves. It is clear that such a feeling as this, if carried very far, and allowed to rule, is nothing else than idolatry; it is inconsistent with the worship of God, because you cannot set yourself up in God’s throne, and at the same time worship Him. It is from this that all rebellions against God have sprung, and do spring to the present day. “Of old time thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bands, and thou saidst, I will not serve” (Jer. ii. 20). Such has been the conduct of men towards God, and its cause is plain—they set up themselves, and their own dignity and independence of thought and

action, as gods, and, therefore, rebel. Pride shows itself in a number of ways; if you are always thinking of yourself, and find it difficult to believe that you are in the wrong, and will not be spoken to, and are unreasonably impatient of reproof, or are very selfish, and want to make everything give way to your wishes, you may be sure that these are the results of a self-worship, of which you are, perhaps, scarcely conscious.

And yet pride is not all bad. A proper appreciation of the dignity of the nature which God has given you, and of the high destinies to which you are called, is the best preservative against sin, and especially against the meaner and baser kinds of sin. A man who has this true notion of his own dignity—the pride of the saints—will consider earthly and passing things beneath him, as St. Stanislaus used to say: “I am not born for present things, but for the future.” This is the true pride which Christians should encourage—the pride that makes them despise all that is base and trivial, and push on boldly to the glorious end which their Creator has appointed for them.

Vanity is something different—it is an idolatry of the good opinion, or the homage of men. We all naturally desire the goodwill and approbation of others, and within its proper limits, it is a useful quality; but it is the source of untold sins if not duly restrained. We are all very much prone to vanity, and scarcely any age or station is free from it. It shows itself in dress and display of all kinds, in the way in which people speak of themselves, and sometimes, unfortunately, in their manner of speaking against their neighbours. It shows itself in most curious and contradictory ways, and even in the most minute and trifling affairs of human life. There is scarcely anything too small for the attention of a man who has given way to his vanity, or too trivial to gratify his craving for admiration: he will be vain of almost anything, and there is nothing he will not do to attract the applause of men, or some kind of notice from them.

It is quite natural for us to like praise, and to value

the esteem and admiration of others, and of itself there is no harm in it; on the contrary, a desire of the approbation of others is often a most useful feeling and a great assistance to us in overcoming the weakness of nature, should we be called upon to do heroic deeds, and perform difficult duties; and with this object, no doubt, the feeling was so deeply rooted in our nature.

If, however, you take delight in the applause of men, and those qualities by which it is gained, so as to make them an *end* and a motive of action, instead of a mere auxiliary to higher motives, you are guilty of vanity, and are in danger of being led into serious harm; still more, if you allow the admiration of men to be your guide in deciding between right and wrong, and to cause you to go against the secret dictates of your conscience. Of all the guides that could be found, the approbation, and praise, and good will of men is the most fallacious; and, indeed, St. James warns us against following it in these very strong words: "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God" (St. James iv. 4).

If, then, my dear brethren, we would rule the little world within us, and keep it spotless before God, we must be on our guard against these twin vices of pride and vanity; we must always suspect ourselves of them, and, perhaps, we have all the more reason for doing so, if we are unconscious of their existence; we must be determined not to make idols either of our own excellence or of the esteem of men, and not to be guided in our conduct by the love of these things. Such a determination, however, is not quite enough; these feelings are so strong within us, that we must be prepared to mortify them, in some degree, or else we can never keep them in due control. No one can ever be reasonably humble unless he compels himself sometimes to bear humiliation, and no one can ever conquer vanity without making some sacrifice for the purpose.

The next class of bad thoughts are those which are evil because they are dangerous: these are idle thoughts,

trifling thoughts, which are "to no purpose." The harm of these is chiefly negative—that is, they leave the mind exposed to danger and temptation. There are a great many people who are thinking all day long, and yet do not supply themselves with anything worth thinking about. Their minds then become like mill-stones which keep on working without any corn to grind—they grind down and wear out themselves. Those who allow their minds to be idle in this fashion are always either building castles in the air, or else dwelling perpetually upon trifles—sometimes upon trifling compliments and satisfactions they have received—sometimes upon equally trifling disputes: and they keep on fighting their battles over again in imagination—sometimes in foolish curiosity about their neighbours, by which they are generally landed in rash judgment; sometimes in imaginary rebellions against authority, or imaginary quarrels with their neighbours, which often are nearly as bad as real quarrels. Almost any real and substantial subject of thought would be less injurious than this idleness of mind, because idleness is the fruitful source of almost every kind of temptation. "Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom thy sister, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance, and the idleness of her and of her daughters" (Ez. xvi. 49). You see that mere idleness is put by the Holy Scripture in very bad company, as one of the great causes of the most shameful sins.

Again, our Lord describes the devil going out of a man, and coming back again to the house whence he had gone out, and "coming he findeth it empty, swept and garnished: then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there, and the last state of that man is made worse than the first" (St. Matt. xii. 44). These words seem to be a clear warning against vacuity of mind—against the danger of having an imagination engaged upon nothing serious, but filled with trivial things and foolish things.

It remains for me to treat of the most seri

of thought—that is, of those which are always and necessarily sinful. These may be classed under the heads of rebellion, malice, and sensuality—amongst which are included the greatest sins which men can commit. We are all by nature inclined to rebel—in the first place, to resist our lawful superiors upon earth, and then to rebel against Almighty God. Even those who do not actually rebel, very often incur the guilt of rebellion by indulging in rebellious thoughts—that is, they rebel in heart, though they cannot do so in action. It would be well if we always had before our eyes the words of Holy Scripture :

“It is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey” (1 Kings xv. 23). If an actual rebellion is so great a sin, we may be sure that an internal rebellion is also grievously sinful before God. Rebellious thoughts do not generally go so far as an intention of actually refusing to obey, but they usually take the form of discontent and complaint, of unwilling and ungracious submission. Sometimes people murmur at the direct dispensations of Providence against the condition of life in which they are placed, or the accidental inconveniences which occur to them; sometimes it is an *indirect* rebellion by murmuring at those whom God has willed to be their superiors. St. Paul says: “Neither do you murmur, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Cor. x. 10).

It is not enough to be obedient, unless we try also to make our obedience willing and cheerful; “for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. ix. 7), and a moody sullen submission is not likely to win favour in His sight. A spirit of resignation is a sign of gratitude to God. Those who are really grateful for the good things they have received from God can easily bear the trials which His Providence sends; “if we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil things?” (Job ii. 10). If, therefore, you find yourself murmuring, and almost rebelling, at the crosses and trials of life, you have reason to fear that you are

wanting in proper gratitude to God. It is very easy for us to take, as a matter of course, all the favours and blessings which God gives us, as if they hardly deserved any thankfulness, and then to complain bitterly if anything is denied us; but such a disposition is odious in the sight of God, and the surest possible way of shutting the door against future favours.

Try, then, my dear brethren, to cultivate a thankful spirit; think of the many blessings God has bestowed on you, and not of the few that He has refused you; remember also that you have nothing to give Him in return, but a grateful and contented heart, and then you will find it easy enough to check thoughts of murmuring and rebellion, should they arise within your minds.

Next to rebellious thoughts against God come malicious thoughts against our brethren, about which I have already in part spoken: envious thoughts, angry thoughts, and revengeful thoughts. Envy is the vice which makes people hate their neighbours on account of their good qualities of body or of mind, or of the happiness and advantages which they possess: sometimes—and this is the worst kind of envy—it is hatred of others, because they are superior to ourselves in virtue and favour with God. Envy is essentially a malicious feeling: it is not a mere admiration of the excellence of others, and a desire to equal, or even to surpass it—it is a hatred of them for possessing it, and a wish to injure them, on account of the good qualities they possess. Jealousy is another form of the same vice: it is envy of the *favour* given to other people: you do not like to hear others praised, or to see any marks of favour bestowed upon them, and are inclined to hate those who are much esteemed by men. Covetousness is an unjust desire of the property of others: that is, not merely a desire to have such things, but an inordinate desire—a desire to have them unjustly, and to the detriment of our neighbour. This sin of covetousness is so important a sin, that it is the special object of the tenth Commandment, “which

forbids all envious and covetous thoughts, and unjust desires of our neighbour's goods and profits." Mere wishing for things, even if they are the property of others, is not the sin—but *unjust* wishing for them, that is setting your heart upon things so as to desire to have them unlawfully, and to the injury of others. These three sins—envy, jealousy and covetousness—are much of the same class, and consist in an unjust craving after what rightfully belongs to our neighbour, and a desire to take it away—whether it be his good qualities, or his favour with men, or his worldly goods. These feelings are part of the natural selfishness of man, and are to be found everywhere, and from them spring a large part of the miseries which afflict the world. If once you give way to any of these feelings, there is an end of peace both for yourself and others. An envious or jealous man, or a covetous man, can never be at peace: whatever his own possessions may be, there will always be something of his neighbour's which is a pain to him: he will be always wanting something more, and always desiring to get something which belongs to others; and this something will prevent him from enjoying what he already possesses.

A covetous, greedy man is always, more or less, like Haman, who, as the Scripture tells us, was wretched and discontented, in the midst of all the honours that could be heaped upon him, because the Jew Mardochai, who sat by the gate, did not pay any attention to him. It is quite necessary for us to guard against this fault, to detect and resist the secret repining at the good of others in whatever shape it comes, and to *compel* ourselves to rejoice, and not to grieve, at the prosperity of our neighbours, even when it seems to surpass our own.

We also offend against our neighbours in our own hearts by indulging in thoughts of hatred and revenge. These thoughts are, perhaps, not generally so active and troublesome as jealous thoughts, but they lie deeper, and are even more grievous; so that St. John says: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 St. John iii. 15). Hatred is the sin by which you exclude anyone, in your

own mind, from the ordinary rights of Christian charity, and take delight in the evil you find in him, and the misfortune which comes to him. This sin is so serious, because it is the exact opposite of charity, which, as St. Paul tells us, "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. xiii. 6). The spirit of revenge goes farther still, and not only excludes from charity, and rejoices in evil, but it also compasses, and procures the evil, or, at any rate, wishes to do so.

The remaining sins of thought are those spoken of in the Ninth Commandment, which are "impure thoughts and desires, and all wilful pleasure in the irregular motions of the flesh." Amongst these may be included all kinds of improper and sensual thoughts of forbidden objects, and all the coarse and dangerous ideas which lead to them.

Besides these serious sins of thought, there are many smaller faults, which sometimes have great influence on a man's exterior life. You may have a habit of peevishness—that is, the habit of being annoyed, and showing your annoyance about trifles; or you may be over susceptible, and much too easily offended; or, again, ungracious in manner, because you will not take the trouble to think of the effect your words and demeanour will have on the feelings of your neighbours. These faults of external behaviour, and most others, depend upon some little fault of mind and heart which might easily be remedied, but which, as it is, does very serious harm.

In fighting against bad thoughts, there are many difficulties to be encountered. The worst ideas and suggestions will sometimes come before your mind, whether you will or not, like clouds passing over the sun, and darkening the earth with their shadows, and you cannot always be certain how far these thoughts are your own fault, so that you will often be in anxiety about them. Nevertheless, you must persevere, and never be discouraged, remembering that the worst thoughts cannot sully the purity of your soul except by your own full consent, and that, so long as you continue honestly to wish to drive away evil, it can never

readily harm you, however strong a hold it may seem, for the moment, to have on your imagination.

The Psalmist says: "Create a clean heart in me, O God! and renew a right spirit within my bowels" (Ps. l. 12). If you will only keep your heart strictly guarded, and pure in the sight of God, you need fear no temptation from without. "Be not afraid of their fear, and be not troubled, but sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts" (1 St. Peter iii. 14).

This purity of heart is the one thing to which Almighty God looks, as He says: "Nor do I judge according to the look of man; for man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart" (1 Kings xvi. 7); and all holiness must begin from the heart. If you want to resist temptation, you must do so in your own thoughts; then you can resist the enemy and conquer him even in the beginning; but if you allow him to take possession of that stronghold, you cannot conquer externally, and your victory would be of no avail if you could.

I have now, my dear brethren, completed my short sketch of the Commandments of God; there are many things connected with them which I have passed over, and many on which I have spoken require very much fuller attention; but I have finished the subject for the present, and I can only remind you that it is by these Commandments we must stand or fall, since our Lord says: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments." I will conclude, therefore, with the words of Holy Scripture: "My son, keep the commandments of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them in thy heart continually, and put them about thy neck. When thou walkest, let them go with thee: when thou sleepest, let them keep thee: and when thou awakest, talk with them. Because the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Prov. vi. 20).



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